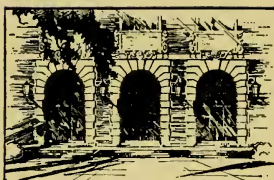


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HARDEN HALL.



VOL. I.

HARDEN HALL;

OR,

THE THREE PROPOSALS.

A Nobel.

EDITED BY THE HON. F—— B——

“While memory watches o’er the sad review,
Of joys that faded like the morning dew;
Peace may depart—and life and nature seem,
A barren path—a wildness and a dream.”

CAMPBELL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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P R E F A C E.

PERMIT me, gentle reader, to request your indulgence, while perusing the following pages.

I have not ventured to subscribe my name to these volumes, although it is as well known to you as any in the "Court Circular;" for were I to do so, probably you would have exclaimed, "It is very questionable whether any amusement can be derived from such a source." But, stop: possibly your opinion in this case may be erroneous. How many a dreary and profitable waste has been brought, by good culture, to produce an abundant crop. How improbable it was,

some five or six years ago, that Lord G——
B——k should ever have proved himself
an orator! But these are days of con-
tinual change; so, before you utterly con-
demn my simple tale, make the attempt to
follow it to the end. Notwithstanding there
may be nothing so very extraordinary in it—

“Dicam insigne, recens, adhuc
Indictum ore alio,”—

yet should it beguile some weary hour, any
trouble the Author may have had will be
more than amply repaid.

“So that it wean me from the weary dream
Of selfish grief or gladness,—so it fling
Forgetfulness around me, it shall seem
To me, though to none else, a not ungrateful theme.”

CHILDE HAROLD.

London, September, 1847.

HARDEN HALL.

CHAPTER I.

THE Honourable and Reverend Arthur Selby had married early in life the daughter of the Honourable George Lyndsay, and soon after their marriage he had been presented to the living of Tonnington, in the south of England. Thither he took his fair bride; and though she had been accustomed to a very different country, having been brought up on the romantic banks of the Wye, and with every luxury both in the country and in town, she rejoiced in the change: she had chosen her own lot in life, and a happy one it proved to her. There seemed little fear of the illustrious family of Selby coming to an

end; for their union had been blest with many children : ten in all.

The sons were dispersed in different parts of the world, in various professions; but it is chiefly with the daughters that my tale has to do, so we leave the sons to speak for themselves.

Mrs. Selby had still remains left of great personal beauty, though of late years, through ill health, her fine commanding figure had become slightly bent. But nothing could change the sweetness of her expression, which beamed with goodness. The mildness of her soft blue eyes formed a fine contrast to the hue of her hair, which, though now intermingled with grey, showed that in her youthful days it had been a dark hazel brown.

Our history commences at an important epoch in Catherine Selby's life, when she had attained the bewitching age of seventeen, and was preparing to make her *début* under the chaperonage of her grandmother, Lady Anne Lyndsay. She was full of joyful anticipations of all the pleasure that awaited her in the great metropolis.

It was towards the end of May, and the few trees that grace Grosvenor-square were looking greener and fresher than they ever do at any other time of the year, when a travelling chariot was seen to stop at No. 46, Grosvenor-street.

It is always rather a nervous and agitating moment whilst waiting for the ring of the door-bell to be answered, and so Catherine Selby found it on the present occasion. Not that anything approaching fear mixed with her feelings of joy. She knew she was shortly to be warmly embraced by her grandmother, and that nothing but pleasure awaited her; still she thought, if I am disappointed: if this London life does not answer all my expectations: if——she was beginning to torture herself with doubts, when the door was opened, and rushing up-stairs she found herself in her grandmother's arms. "My dearest granny, how well you are looking, and how lovely the room is! Newly furnished, and a new piano-forte! How lovely everything looks! I am so happy to be with you again."

"And so am I, dearest child, to see you

here ; but now tell me how your mother is, and when the rest intend to join us ?——for come they must this season for a short time. Your grandfather says he insists on their doing so. What accounts have you of your brothers ? and all the others, are they well ?”

The good old lady inquired after the whole family individually. All these questions Catherine was charmed to answer, for her heart overflowed with affection to those she had left. Her grandmother now begged she would take some refreshment, and rest herself ; for, aid she, smiling and patting the beaming cheek of her beloved grandchild, “ You are to begin your gaiety to-night, by going to a small *soirée dansante* at Lady Julia Read’s ; and as this is your first appearance in the gay world, I wish you to look particularly well, not wearied as if from a journey.”

“ Oh, how charming ! a dance to-night ? I am not a bit tired : quite ready for anything, not the least inclined to lie down : much more ready to frisk about ;” and, humming a waltz, she began whirling round the room.

“ Stop, stop, dear Catherine, you must be

under orders ;” and Lady Anne Lyndsay tried (though without success) to look decided and severe. “ You positively must save yourself for this evening : and now come and see your new apartment.” So saying, they both left the drawing-room, and proceeded up-stairs.

When they reached the landing-place, Catherine was turning to the right ; but her grandmother said, “ I have a new room for you, my love, away from the street, that you may be enabled to sleep quietly after all your gaieties : it is fitted up with your favourite pink, so I hope you will like it.”

“ Oh ! it is lovely, indeed !” exclaimed Catherine ; “ a perfect boudoir !”

In fact, it was so ; it was octagon, with pannelled oak wainscoting : that dark rich oak that our forefathers so much admired. The bedstead was also of dark oak, carved ; and so were four chairs, and a curiously made table, in the window. This had always been a great favourite of Catherine’s, because when shut up it appeared a round table, and when the legs were drawn on one side, it became an old-fashioned arm-chair. But amongst all this

ancient furniture, more modern comforts were not neglected. There was the toilette table, with its white muslin cover, lined with pale pink, on which stood a handsome mirror, various bottles of scent, and those numberless little articles which adorn a bed-room that is occupied by a person of taste. On the other side stood a handsome bookcase, containing small editions of the best English authors, and all materials requisite for writing.

“And is this really to be my *own* room all the time I am here?” exclaimed Catherine, in such ecstasies with all she saw, as scarcely to know what to do next. “You have, indeed, remembered all my fancies and whims, dearest granny, and have made for me a perfect paradise; and yet here is one thing I have not noticed—an oak wardrobe, I declare!” and on opening the door, another exclamation of delight burst from her.—“Oh! what a lovely dress! what roses!” and holding up the wreath, a piece of paper fell to the ground, with the following words written on it:—“For Kate’s first ball, with her grandfather’s love.” Tears filled Catherine’s eyes, as she read these few simple

words. That an old man, like Mr. Lyndsay, should think of her dress at all, appeared to her such great kindness, that she could hardly refrain from kissing the little scrap of paper which bore her grandfather's writing.

"And where is grandpapa, that I may thank him? for I must thank him this very minute."

"No, my love, you cannot thank him directly, for he is gone out to dinner——"

"To dinner; why, it is not six o'clock!"

"No, my dear, I know that; but his old friend, General Legge, dines at half-past five; and we dine at seven, that you may have time to rest beforehand. Do not think of dressing for dinner; but lie down now, and at seven your maid will come to you."

"Oh, dearest granny, do not go away; I would much rather talk and chatter with you."

"I know it, my dear," replied Lady Anne, smiling; "so once more adieu;" and, kissing her *own* Catherine, as she fondly called her, with great tenderness, left the room.

"What a whirl of anticipated delight I am

in," thought Catherine. "I am not the least tired; and yet, if grandmama wishes it, I will rest. But lived there ever such a happy girl as I am?—everybody is kind to me. Papa, mama, brothers, and sisters, Sandford, and Elizabeth—all kind to me. If they were but here, I should have nothing left to wish for: but we shall soon meet again; and, besides, I shall write to mama every day, and to-morrow how much I shall have to tell her;—all about my ball to-night. I wonder if the gown will fit me. How I wish it was time to dress. Those little tunics — how pretty they are, looped up with roses, which look so real and natural! Well, well, the Stanleys may say what they like about London being dull, and London rooms being dark and dismal; where could one see a prettier room than this? I am determined to be pleased with everything and everybody."

CHAPTER II.

OUR youthful heroine had scarcely come to this desirable and wise conclusion, when, after a gentle knocking at the door, her maid came in to say that it wanted only a quarter to seven,—if Miss Selby wished to make her toilet.

“Not till after dinner, Wilson, thank you. But do look into the wardrobe, and see what grandpapa has given me for a ball to-night.”

“Why, miss, you are not surely going to a ball to-night! you will be dead, miss, with sheer tiredness.” But the change in Mrs. Wilson’s tone and manner when she saw the ball paraphernalia were so apparent, that Catherine, who had a strong sense of the ludicrous, could not refrain from laughing, saying, “Well, Wilson, do you think it pretty? Had I better go to the ball, or not?”

“Oh, yes, miss, go, by all manner of means : but there is the bell, miss, for dinner, and her ladyship does not like waiting.”

“No more she does, Wilson, so I will run down if you will put out all my things for me, and I will come up between eight and nine.”

At the drawing-room door Catherine was met by the old butler, Parker, who had often carried her mother as a child, and bore great affection to all her children. The good-natured old man waited a moment till she was fairly seated, and then announced the dinner.

The dining-room had little to distinguish it from other large London dining-rooms, with the exception of some fine old family portraits and pictures of Mrs. Selby and her brothers—all of whom had died very young—by Sir Thomas Lawrence. One of Mrs. Selby in her childhood was very pretty : a fair-haired boy, her youngest brother, was kneeling at her side, near the grave of their elder brothers ; the attitude of the children was strikingly beautiful : it seemed as if they were pouring

out all their griefs and childish sorrows (sometimes how keenly felt!) at the grave of those who, when alive, had soothed and softened all their little disappointments and troubles. Another—and this was the one that Catherine liked the best—represented her mother when about the age of ten, crossing a stream, on a little rough Shetland pony: the attitude of the child was so fearless and happy, that she appeared to smile upon the difficulties which beset the mountain-path she must traverse ere she reached her home.

Lady Anne Lyndsay herself had never been handsome; though she was a fine, striking-looking woman, tall and slight, with a pleasant countenance, and fine brown eyes: her hair, when young, had rivalled the raven's back, but now it was perfectly white, and had been so for many years.

The two ladies had soon despatched their dinner, and then retired to the drawing-room, where Catherine, after trying the new pianoforte, and pronouncing it perfect, began to arrange a bouquet with some of the flowers she had brought up to town with her. At

length, to her delight, it was time to go and dress; though her granny would willingly have waited another hour: but as the clock struck nine, she rose, saying,—

“Now, my love, your labour must begin; and when you are dressed come to my boudoir for some tea, where you will probably find your grandfather waiting to see you: but do not hurry and fuss yourself, or Mrs. Wilson will be angry with both grandpapa and grandmama.”

About an hour after this little conversation, a gentle knocking was heard by Lady Anne at her door, and Catherine entered.

“Oh, my dear grandpapa, how do you do? how kind of you to give this charming dress! does it not look beautiful?” and she turned round, and held it out to the pleased old man.

“It does, indeed, become you very well, my dear: I am very glad you like it so much; and here are two bracelets for you.” Saying this, the kind old man took up two little red leather cases, and showed her a gold bracelet studded with turquoise, and a hair bracelet with a dark blue enamel clasp. “This

last is your grandmother's and my hair, my dear, which I knew you would value very much."

"I do, indeed. A thousand thanks for both! I shall always wear the hair bracelet,—never be without it. There is the carriage! I am sure I heard the bell ring:" and her colour heightened, and her bright eyes flashed brighter than before. Her grandfather then announced his intention of going that night with them, that he might see his favourite little Kate, as he always called her, dance at her first ball.

They soon arrived at Lady Julia Read's. She lived in Manchester-square, the corner house. Sounds of music met their ears at the door; and they were ushered, by a long file of servants, up-stairs, into a lofty square room, so full of easy chairs, ottomans, stands of flowers, and various ornaments, that no little caution was necessary in threading your way through this labyrinth of furniture. In the first apartment there were not many of the company assembled, but as they proceeded, it was evident, from the increased noise of voices,

that they approached the scene of action ; and when they had crossed this overstocked upholsterer's shop, as it might with truth be well called, they saw that it opened into a long gallery where dancing was going on. Here they found Lady Julia Read and her husband waiting to receive their company. She was attired in white crape, made in the most juvenile and most fashionable style. Mr. Lyndsay was her cousin ; and when he did her the honour to invite her to his hospitable house in Grosvenor-street, she very graciously accepted the invitation, and was pleased at being noticed by him : but in the country she did not scruple to forget all the kindnesses she had all her life received from him. Nothing of *this* was, however, visible in her manner at this moment ; and her reception was most gracious and cordial. When Lady Anne Lyndsay said, " You must let me introduce our granddaughter, Miss Selby, to you," she exclaimed, in the most natural way,

" Oh, pray do ! We are cousins, you know, and ought to be well acquainted with one another."

This introduction being over, Lady Julia Read presented *her cousin* to her husband, an insignificant little man, bedizened with chains and rings, and wearing a profusion of light, greasy-looking hair. He had married for rank, and his wife for money : there was not much love lost between them : they had both obtained the two things most coveted by them, and managed to keep up a decent show of affection in the eyes of the world.

"We must get Miss Selby a partner," said Mr. Read, putting his glass to his eye, and staring into the other room, while his fingers mechanically fidgeted about a large bloodstone seal suspended from a massive gold watch chain. "Are you," he continued, to Miss Selby, "acquainted with my nephew, Mr. Read?"

"Not in the least," replied Miss Selby.

"Then I am sure he will feel honoured by dancing with you, if not engaged. But, really," he continued, affectedly, "he is such a pet with all the ladies, that I very much fear we shall not catch him."

Mr. Lyndsay touched Catherine's arm, and

hoped she was duly sensible of the great honour that awaited her. A bright smile was her reply; and the next minute she heard, "Mr. Read,—Miss Selby."

"Will Miss Selby dance with me the next *valse*?" he inquired, in an affected tone.

She bowed assent, and they moved off to join the circle who were whirling round at railroad pace.

Catherine was passionately fond of dancing, and she had now a partner equally so; there was not more time for conversation than usually happens upon such occasions. She settled, in her own mind, that the nephew was superior to his uncle. She found him quiet and gentleman-like, though a prodigious dandy. When the dance was ended, they proceeded to the refreshment room, where they were mixed up with the rest of the company; and, as Catherine's acquaintance was as yet very limited, Mr. Read introduced her to Mr. Drake and his fair partner, the lovely Miss Elliott.

Catherine was young enough to be charmed with everything she saw. She was delighted

with the little room and a perfect bijou of a conservatory that opened into it, scented by orange trees and the most fragrant roses and jasmine.

“I think we ought now to return to grandmama, Mr. Read; she will be looking out for me.”

As Catherine said this, she saw a smile of derision on Miss Elliott's fair face, who whispered something to her partner, and he smiled in return.

Rather annoyed at this, Catherine moved faster away, and after some little pushing and squeezing, succeeded in finding Lady Anne Lyndsay, who was indefatigable in providing her with partners. There were at this ball, the usual amount of well-dressed people and pretty girls; to Miss Selby there seemed to be more beauty than she had ever seen before collected together. She was a novice in the London world, and knew nothing of the countless numbers of handsome people that are nightly seen flitting from one gay festive scene to another. But what excited her horror was the old Duchess of B —, rouged

up to the eyes, with plumpers in her cheeks to keep them from becoming wrinkled; a whole set of false teeth—which, by some mistake, showed all the gold fastenings—and a black wig. Not content with a common close cap, which might have hid some defects and kept the wig straight, she must needs have her diamonds put as a tiara round her head; and her pink satin gown was made in a most unbecoming style, so decoltée that her wizzened throat was seen to perfection, more resembling dried parchment than anything else.

“How dreadful!” said Catherine, as the old, dressed-up automaton passed her. “How different from you, grandmama.”

The contrast was indeed striking, for the neck of the latter was carefully covered up with a snow-white handkerchief—her grey curls confined under a neat little close cap. She looked what she was—an English grandmother of high degree; and as Catherine gazed on her, she thought that, with the exception of her own beloved mother, she had never seen so loveable a face.

Two o'clock came, and feeling tired from

her journey, Catherine was quite ready to leave the gay scene, having enjoyed her evening very much. A sound and refreshing sleep recruited her for the labours of the following day.

CHAPTER III.

BREAKFAST was hardly over the next day, when a note was brought to Lady Anne Lyndsay. Catherine was feeling impatient to know the contents. She felt a presentiment that it concerned her. Her grandmother seeing plainly by her tell-tale face how interested she was, put the note into her hands without any comment. It ran thus:—

“DEAR LADY ANNE,

“I have taken an opera-box for this evening, and if you will allow me to do so, I shall have much pleasure in taking Miss Selby with me,

Ever yours truly,

LUCY ELLIOTT.”

“Well, my dear, what do you say?”

“Oh! go; go, decidedly, if I may. The opera is the very thing I most wished to go to, if you have no objection, granny. But who is this Mrs. Elliott?”

“Why, did you not see her last night at the ball, and her pretty daughter with her? She is a kind person, and I am very glad you should go with her: but see if there is no time mentioned. Yes, in the cover—eight o’clock; so you will see the whole affair, and I trust enjoy it very much.”

After the answer had been duly despatched, and a long letter home, Catherine thought she ought to occupy herself with reading, but it was quite useless. Opera! opera! was all she could think of, and she threw away the book in disgust. While, therefore, she is giving herself up to these delightful anticipations, we must beg our readers will follow us to another scene.

A man, who appeared about six and thirty, was sitting leaning his arm on the breakfast-table, lolling over a newspaper. He might once have been good-looking; but now in the deshabelle of a blue silk dressing-gown, and

uncombed light hair, it was difficult to imagine he ever could have boasted of good looks. Nearly opposite to him, in an equally listless attitude, was seen reclining a fat woman in a yellow dressing-gown, wearing bracelets and rings.

“I think your nephew might have been here by this time to inquire how we are after all the racketing of last night,” said Lady Julia Read: for she it was; “besides, I have been thinking of a very good match for him.”

“You had better let him manage his own affairs on that head, and not have a finger in every pie, Lady Julia,” replied her husband, in a sullen tone.

“Have a finger in every pie, indeed! and who is better able to manage a good match for him than myself? You do not think, Mr. Read, do you, there are many women in my station of life who would demean themselves by marrying the son of a trades——”

“Stop, wife,—stop this moment!” exclaimed Mr. Read, becoming scarlet; “you gave me your word of honour, woman, that you would never mention that fact to any one; and let

me tell you that there are few people who would let an extravagant wife have her own way so much as I have always let you, since that cursed day we were married. Ah, well I remember that day! I thought you then pretty and good; but I have lived to see my mistake, and have discovered that all is not gold that glitters."

Here he was interrupted by a loud laugh from Lady Julia, who exclaimed,—

"Well, you have put yourself into a mighty rage all about nothing. But now tell me, when can you let me have some more money? for I owe above thirty pounds, which must be paid to-day. Mr. Read, do not start and look so frightened, as if you had never heard of thirty pounds in your life!—when I know for certain that you paid yesterday fifty pounds for some paltry plants which nobody cares for. However, money I want, and money I *will* have—I *must* have, or else my father, *Lord Rawden*," with marked emphasis on the last two words, "shall hear of it."

So saying, she got up and left the room. Mr. Read's reflections were none of the

pleasantest after her departure : not that her presence would have softened matters in the slightest degree. He saw himself daily getting more involved ; and though a rich man, no fortune could stand such needless extravagance as both he and his wife had been guilty of. There was but one expedient, and that was persuading his nephew to cut off the entail, so that he might dispose of his house and property : but, though dead to most good feelings, he still felt some compunction in doing this. His father had made a great fortune by trading in wool, and at his decease left his son a fine place in Somersetshire, with a handsome fortune to keep it up, strictly entailed ; so that, though his manners and education were decidedly against him, he contrived to *catch* Lady Julia Mawley, and prevail on her to marry him : she not being very unwilling at two and thirty, thinking, probably—and as she herself considered most correctly—that it was her last chance. This ill-assorted match had proved no happier than many others : at the end of the first week the pair had discovered that the less they

saw of one another, the more agreeable it was to both parties; though, at the same time, it was mutually agreed upon, that in the eyes of the world all should appear most loving and affectionate.

Happily no children had followed their union, to be brought up in the same vicious and dreadful principles: for that they were Christians, living in a Christian land, never seemed to occur to either of them.

It is now time to inquire how Lady Julia Read occupied herself in her boudoir: it was a round room at the end of the gallery we have before mentioned; and she had scarcely had time to array herself in the smartest morning toilet, before *the* nephew, *par excellence*, made his appearance.

“My dear boy,” she began, “you are the very person I wanted. You must come and sit by me and listen to all I have got to say; for, in the first place, you have been the cause of a most serious altercation this morning between your uncle and myself.”

“Good heavens! madam, you don’t mean it?”

“ I do, indeed : but that is of little moment. A little tiff of this sort blows over so soon, and is of such rare occurrence, that it was hardly worth mentioning. But now tell me, how did you like the ball last night ? ”

“ I thought nothing could have gone off better, — everything was so beautifully arranged ; but what is of still rarer occurrence, people seemed pleased and satisfied. There was one charming girl. Of all the young ladies I have seen a long time, Miss Selby appears to me the most attractive : there is none of that manner now so common amongst girls, of laying themselves out to be caught by the first man who is fool enough to attend to them : she seemed a perfect novice in such arts.”

“ And so, my dear, of course she is ; and as you seem so much smitten with her, I regret the more the report which I heard just now, that she was to marry no one who had not ten thousand a year. But I don't believe it, for her grandfather has always said that he would provide amply for her ; and I think your best plan is to make up to her as much

as you can. If she has anything, it will be acceptable at any rate: she is to be the 'belle' this season, and therefore first come first served, as the old saying is; and you were the very first person she danced with."

"Mere chance, mere chance, dear aunt."

"Well, have it so: but was it mere chance that I overheard her say to Lady Anne Lyndsay, that you were *very* handsome, *very* agreeable, and she liked you *VERY* much?" saying these words very slowly. "My plan is," continued Lady Julia, "that you at once call there, and inquire after her. No, stop, that will not do. Go, with my compliments, and beg to know whether the old gentleman is the worse for coming here last night. And, stay, I have no doubt but that Miss Selby is going somewhere this evening, so give her this bouquet, with my kindest love. Find out from the servant where she is to be found this evening; and you must contrive to get there also, for I am determined to take you in hand, and have you well married. You can have no objection to a pretty wife with 2,000*l.* a year, which is the fortune of two old maiden

aunts, who are morally certain to leave her every farthing they have scraped together during the last sixty years."

"Well, aunt, I will do all this, if you wish it; but I am not yet over head and ears in love."

"Love! nonsense, boy, who ever talks of love to a woman of the world like myself? Talk of it as much as you please to Miss Selby, but never mention it to me. Come to me this time to-morrow, and tell me how your affairs are going on; in the mean time, I shall immediately spread the report that Miss Selby accepted you last night, too thankful for such a good opportunity of escaping from her old granny."

Great was Mr. Read's disappointment, when he reached Grosvenor-street, to find every one was out. What to do with the nosegay was the next question, and after having well weighed every circumstance, he resolved to return it to his aunt, telling the simple truth. Poor young man! he was weak, as well as—but he shall speak for himself. Lady Julia Read was angry at her bouquet being re-

turned, and immediately wrote a note to Miss Selby, to say that her nephew had just been to call on her for the express purpose of offering her this bouquet for the opera, but that he was too humble and too modest to leave it with the servant, so she had taken upon herself to send it. The note was hardly despatched, when Lady Anne's cards were brought to her.

CHAPTER IV.

THAT evening saw Catherine dressed and ready at the appointed time, not without some nervousness at the thoughts of going into public with a perfect stranger. She had not much time to ruminate over these disagreeable feelings, and soon found herself completely settled in the front seat of a most capital box in the centre of the house. She had never been at the opera before, and this was a very crowded night ; at first the multitude of faces quite bewildered her, but she soon became accustomed to the sight. Her rapturous delight was intense when the music began, and when Lablache, and Persiani, and Grisi filled that immense space with their powerful voices, she scarcely dared to breathe, so great was her fear of losing a single word : hers was pure unmixed delight. She was not long left to

these pleasing reflections, for the first act was hardly over when young Mr. Elliott appeared with a friend, whom he introduced as Lord Fleetwood. Catherine started back as she heard his name, colouring deeply; but after giving a distant bow of recognition, appeared again intensely interested in all she saw. She strove, indeed, to check the "tell-tale" in her cheek, and to appear an indifferent spectator of what she saw passing between Lord Fleetwood and Miss Elliott. The latter was dressed in pale blue, and as Catherine looked upon her she certainly could not but acknowledge to herself that she looked very lovely.

"I hope, Miss Selby, you are enjoying your season," said his lordship; "it was quite by chance I heard you were in town."

This, and such common-place remarks, was all that passed; and, to the eye of strangers, they were to all appearance perfectly indifferent to each other.

Miss Elliott spoke but little to any one save Lord Fleetwood, who paid her great attention; and Catherine heard him whisper

to her, "Pray how did you become acquainted with Miss Selby? Has she been long in town?" Miss Elliott was not one who liked to be cross-questioned about other pretty young ladies: her own idol, she expected others to make her theirs. Her answer was, therefore, short and concise, that they had met the night before at a ball given by Lady Julia Read.

Lord Fleetwood saw immediately from her mortified tone that he had been guilty of a great offence, and to reetify it began immediately to talk to this amiable young lady about her dress, the beauty of her curls, her bracelets, &c., and her pretty face soon resumed its bright smile.

In the mean time, Mr. Read had made his appearance, and was endeavouring to gain Catherine's attention: she was but a bad actress, and could not very quickly recover her composure, though she made great efforts to do so; however, she observed, from time to time, a cold smile come over Lord Fleetwood's face, as he caught her eye. In about an hour, both the gentlemen took their leave, and Catherine

began to breathe more freely, and thoroughly to enjoy the opera: but she was not sorry when the carriage arrived; and after thanking Mrs. Elliott for her kindness, was glad to find herself once more alone in her own room. Her maid having retired to rest—being, to use her own expression, “knocked up with sheer tiredness,”—and also every soul in the house, the stillness, perhaps, worked upon Catherine: she could not contain herself any longer, and bursting into tears, she mentally exclaimed, “So all my pleasure is gone, if I am to meet this horrid man at every turn. I will return home to-morrow. But how can I be so selfish, so undutiful to those who have done so much to promote my happiness? I had better by far tell grandmama all my adventures to-morrow.” Then she recollected that they were not her own adventures she had to relate, but those of one equally dear to her—those of one she loved with the truest sisterly affection; and not feeling at liberty to do this, she wisely resolved merely to mention having met Lord Fleetwood, and nothing more.

While Catherine is quietly sleeping, we

must beg to draw the attention of our readers to her mother and sister Susan. The former was deeply interested in reading a closely written letter ; it was from her daughter, and contained the account of her first night at the opera. Here there were no reservations ; she had nothing to hide from such a mother and sister, who from earliest childhood had been accustomed to read her, and know her every thought. But when Mrs. Selby came to the detested name of Lord Fleetwood, a mist came over her eyes, and she trembled so violently that the letter was nearly falling from her hands ; then, making a strong effort, she repressed these outward emotions, and merely said to Susan, " A little water, my love."

Susan was very much alarmed when she saw her mother's face, and exclaiming, " Good God ! has anything happened to Catherine ?" snatched up the letter. There she saw ample cause for her mother's agitation, and rapidly figured to herself, with the brilliant imagination of sixteen, the misery a renewed intercourse with such a man must bring to all parties.

Mrs. Selby was perplexed by the most painful thoughts; at length she said, "Catherine must remain where she is: she must learn to control all emotion on seeing Lord Fleetwood: she must learn to struggle against feelings such as we, my dear Susan, this moment have given way to. Remember what the dying words of your beloved sister were two years ago,—‘Let my sad story be forgotten, and with it all angry feelings towards the author of my unhappiness.’"

Floods of tears prevented Susan giving any other answer, except throwing her arms round her mother's neck and imploring a blessing on that beloved head—on that mother who in every trial, every distress, soothed her children's spirits; taught them to look to the Author of all good for peace and comfort; and still more by her example than by her precepts, showed how necessary it was to preserve a cheerful demeanor towards all men.

Mrs. Selby now recommended her daughter to take some exercise, knowing that nothing so soon changes the thoughts and ideas of young people as being in the fresh air. Susan

would have remonstrated, but seeing her mother decidedly wished it, she said she would walk to Newstead Lodge, and see the Stanleys.

“Do, my love; but I need hardly say, never mention a syllable about our affairs to any one beyond our own immediate circle. You know that I encourage, as much as possible, every openness when we are quite alone, but never to strangers does it answer to talk of private affairs.”

Smiling, and giving a cheerful assent, after kissing her mother, Susan quickly equipped herself for walking, and set off. It was only a mile to Newstead Lodge, where she was going. Those who have never visited the south of England, imagine that the whole of Wiltshire is like Salisbury Plain,—one universal down from one end of the country to another. Susan had often heard this observation made by strangers, but she knew how untrue it was; and as the sun shone brightly above her, she felt her mother had been right in sending her out.

Her path lay along the banks of the river Avon, which by Tonnington winds very pret-

tilly, and was of considerable width. That part of the country is well wooded; and the way she went led through pleasant fields that sloped down to the water, and, at this time of the year, were filled with haymakers, altogether forming a gay scene. Many groups of children were at play, some making crowns of the yellow buttercups, while others wove chains with the bright daisies; and one little curly-pated boy particularly attracted her attention: some of those beautiful flowers commonly called ragged robins were twisted in his dark curls, and he looked so joyous and happy that she stopped to inquire his name.

At first the children looked abashed, and smiled without answering; but when Susan repeated the question in her soft, gentle voice, the eldest of the party, a sturdy boy, whose hair was quite bleached with continual exposure to the sun, said, "He's Betsy Moor's boy, miss."

"Oh, yes, I know him now; they live near the bridge, over the way," replied Susan: for both she and her sisters were well acquainted with every one in their own sweet village.

Pursuing her path a little farther, it led next through a small fir copse, thickly studded with larch, then clothed with their first fresh leaves : so green, so bright, so soft does the opening bud of the larch appear, before the summer sun has darkened its hue, that it reminds one of youth's first innocence, before

“ 'T is blighted by the world's cold scorn.”

The river here making a sudden turn, our little Susan had to cross over it on the labourers' bridge of a single plank ; but she did so with a firm, steady step, for it did not occur to her that there could be any danger ; and, throwing herself on the mossy grass on the opposite side, she loosened her bonnet, and let the gentle spring breeze play through her light curls. On hearing the village clock strike twelve, she jumped up, and, hastening on her way, soon saw the chimneys of Newstead Lodge appear amongst the trees. The present proprietor had been making great alterations ; he had bought it of his eldest brother, who, having another fine place, cared very little for this, and had never resided

there. Indeed, till his brother took it off his hands, he had seriously thought of converting it into a farm-house,—the fate of so many old family mansions in those days. Most of the old house had been pulled down; but still there were sufficient remains to shew that it had been once a mansion of consequence. In the sixteenth century it had been a manor house, built in that peculiar style we denominate Elizabethan, by an ancestor of the present proprietor, Sir Roger de Stanlie, a worthy country knight of those days, who lived and died on his own estate. The part that was the least altered from what it had been originally, was the lodge, which was a very curious old building, constructed at each side of the gate with a watch-tower over the gateway. This tower could only be entered by means of a trap-door; and though in the time of Queen Bess, secret hiding-places were not so much needed, this had been of great service in the time of the Rebellion. Susan never approached the house without dwelling on the many wonderful escapes she had heard related of people, from this same tower. To

her it gave the place considerable interest, that Charles II. had been allowed to sleep there one night. The Stanlie of that day was a warm supporter of the throne; and, by his great zeal against the Parliament, was well nigh being brought to the scaffold soon after his beloved master. But the democrats, knowing his influence in the country, thought it more advisable to conciliate him; and therefore allowed him to return to his own estate. Deserted and dismantled he found it; the fanatic Roundheads had been there, and sacked the house. For months the old knight heard no tidings of his only son, the last surviving branch of his family. But he was destined to have this happiness before his grey hairs sank with sorrow into the grave. The night was dark and stormy, when, soon after he had retired to rest, the deep bark of his favourite bloodhounds aroused him. Those were days when weapons of some sort were never far from hand; and, hastily rising, the old knight buckled on his sword, and descended to the court-yard. Amidst the darkness and rain, it was difficult to distin-

guish any object. He went straight to the lodge gate, about a hundred yards from the house, and there he fancied he could see two men endeavouring to force their way in; they seemed to be both heavily armed, and dressed alike. As Sir John approached, he heard them speaking in quiet, low tones. Great was his joy on discovering that it was his son, with his king, in disguise, flying to the nearest seaport, to take ship for the continent. The first words he spoke, asking who it was, revealed to his fond son that it was his father. Religiously was the *incognito* of the king kept during the two days he dwelt there, and the third morning saw them, by sunrise, far on their journey towards the coast; and from thence they escaped to the continent. Susan heartily rejoiced in their safety; and eyed the old tower with great partiality as she approached the house.

Her friends were at home, busily engaged in writing notes. Maria jumped up, and, putting a note into her hand, said, "Read it—read it." It was to Mrs. Selby, to say, that on the 29th of the month, Mrs. Stanley

hoped to give a *fête champêtre*, and that all her young friends from the rectory would come to it. Susan's eyes glistened with delight, as she exclaimed, "How delightful! we shall be enchanted to come. I can answer for mama."

"Yes; and we want you to come the night before," said a dozen voices at once; "because you can help us to arrange matters. Will you come?"

"I shall like it, of all things, if mama can spare me. I shall be charmed!"

"Well, then, I am sure it is a settled thing," said Mrs. Stanley; "for when did Mrs. Selby ever refuse her children anything that she thought gave them pleasure?"

"Never, indeed," replied Susan, much gratified at this just praise of her mother. "It will be Tuesday week; so I must come to you on Monday."

And then the girls proceeded to discuss their different dresses, with great glee.

Mrs. Stanley was occupied in reading the newspaper, when suddenly she exclaimed, "Why, how is this, Susan, that you did not tell me of your sister's marriage?"

"Because I never heard of it," was the laughing reply.

"Oh, come, there is no use saying that, for here it is in black and white;" and Mrs. Stanley read:—"It is now generally known in the fashionable circles, that the lovely and accomplished Miss Selby, grand-daughter of the Honourable G. Lyndsay, will be shortly led to the hymeneal altar by Augustus Read, Esq., nephew of Mr. and Lady Julia Read. The young lady is heiress to a very considerable fortune.'"

"What humbug! what arrant nonsense!" exclaimed Susan. "Who can have put anything so absurd, so untrue, in the *Morning Post*? and an heiress besides: that is a capital idea! one amongst ten children to be an heiress would be something quite new!" and she laughed so heartily that all her young friends joined in chorus, not ceasing to wonder who could have put such a ridiculous paragraph in the paper. "But papa will be so annoyed," continued Susan. "Who can this Mr. Read be?—But I forgot to tell you that we heard from Catherine to-day: a very long

letter: she has been quite gay already, and sent her best love to you all. And now, adieu; I must be off, or mama will think me lost—besides, I must go and tell her about the paragraph. There is two o'clock striking, and I promised to be at home by that time."

Maria immediately proposed walking part of the way back with Susan, and in a few minutes they were proceeding arm and arm towards Tonnington. The two families lived so near that a great intimacy subsisted between them. This was not occasioned by any peculiar similarity of character, for, with the exception of their all being very good-natured, there were few points on which they thought alike: perhaps, of all the daughters, the two that resembled each other the least were Maria and Susan. The latter was open and confiding almost to a fault, never dreaming of love and marriage. The former was fond of secrets and mysteries, and never so well pleased as when she had some wedding to discuss. Accordingly, they had not proceeded far, before Maria exclaimed:—

“I wonder if it is true that Catherine is going to be married? I dare say it is.”

“Of course not,” interrupted Susan; “don’t you think we should have heard of it? Besides, I am quite sure that the utmost of her acquaintance with this Mr. Read is dancing with him at his uncle’s ball; so it is quite impossible.”

“As to that, there is nothing impossible in the case. Partners in a quadrille have been changed for partners for life; and there is such a thing as love at first sight: and yet—” and here Maria hesitated, for she knew how differently her friend had been taught to think upon these subjects from herself; but she could not resist the temptation, and so she continued,—“Mr. Read is hardly of high enough rank to captivate a fine girl like Catherine at first sight.”

“His rank would have little to do with it, I should think,” said Susan.

“Why, is not rank the one thing that girls like ourselves most look to when we marry?” said Maria; “and does not a coronet in your

eyes cover a multitude of sins? I am sure it does in mine."

"And not one in mine," replied Susan. "Why, would a coronet on one's carriage add to one's happiness, if the man who gave it to you was disagreeable, and unsuited to you?"

"At least,——you know,——the fact is, my dear Susan, you are yet too young to know the full value of it. But, believe me, if there were two Venuses in shape and form, and two Minervas in wisdom, equal in every other respect, but one a countess and the other a plain Mrs. Nobody, in the eyes of the world, that countess would be twice as much valued as her rival."

"That may be very true," replied Susan, "of some people; but still, I don't see that, because the world thought the countess best off, it at all follows that she was so."

"Well, at least take my advice, Susan, on one point; do not refuse a good match merely because you do not like the man. You may like him afterwards; and when he is married to another, you will be sorry for it. And as

to being over head and ears in love, why, I think, between you and me, the thing is quite absurd; so I shall expect to hear more of Mr. Read. *Nous verrons*;" and she looked archly at Susan, who laughed good-humouredly, though rather annoyed by these remarks. She knew that Maria alluded to an early offer that had been made to her, and which, at sixteen, Maria had, to use her own expression, thrown away. But the history had been so often told to Susan,—who being a good listener, was generally favoured by all her friends with their private griefs—that she did not wish to hear it all over again, and was not sorry to change the subject: so they talked of new songs, of drawings, and fixed on a very pretty spot for sketching the church at Tonnington; the last mile appeared shorter than usual, and they very soon arrived at home. Maria then proposed to return, but Susan insisted on her going in to see her mother; and after a little lively chat, she rose and took her leave of them.

CHAPTER V.

THERE is generally, in every large family, some particular family feature; and though it must be described by negatives, the one which the Selbys shone in was a perfect freedom from all coquetry and flirting: they none of them ever thought it beneath them to let it be publicly known that weeks and months often passed without their seeing, scarcely hearing of "an eligible young man."

With the family party at Newstead, it was widely different; they thought every week that did not bring some youth to their door a *dead loss*. Maria was really an accomplished, clever girl; she drew well, and sang sweetly, and ought to have found occupation in herself; but such a thing she never dreamt of: she was entirely dependent on society; and as they lived the whole year in a country

village, with the occasional change of visiting at other country houses, she had long made up her mind to embrace the first opportunity she met with of changing her name. Her mother was an easy, good-natured, kind-hearted woman; there was no kindness she would not have performed for a living soul; but, like the best of us, she had her foibles. Her predominant weakness was a very natural one,—a devout admiration of beauty in the other sex. With a most indulgent husband, and affectionate children, a good house, and complete establishment—the last being by no means unimportant in her eyes—she might have been most thoroughly happy, had she not been literally dying to see her daughters married. Charlotte, the eldest, was nine and twenty: a very charming person; and though fully appreciated by her mother, yet sometimes that mother could not conceal her great, her overpowering wish to see each of her dear girls at the head of a fine establishment. Still, she had nearly given up all hope of having Charlotte settled. Her manner, generally, was so cold and distant, that it was only those

who were admitted to her confidence, who esteemed her as she deserved. By her own sex she was adored; and in her own family was reckoned a perfect Minerva. Nothing could be settled, from the choosing a bonnet ribbon, to the most important affair, without her help; and now she was called here, there, and everywhere, to make some preparation for this grand fête.

Mr. Stanley, like a wise man, the moment after the scheme had been proposed and he had given his consent to his delighted children, had set off for London, and did not intend returning till *the very day*: by so doing, as Mrs. Stanley quietly remarked, giving a strong proof of genuine good sense; because everybody knew how much gentlemen were in the way when ladies wished to have any little gaiety. The part that interested the lady of the house most, was writing to four young men, to beg they would honour her with their company. All the preparations were made on the grandest scale:—but we must not forestall the anticipated pleasure by taking a glance behind the scenes.

Besides, it is now time to return to Lady Julia Read, who we left well pleased at having sent Miss Selby a bouquet. The following morning found her again in the same attire in her boudoir at the end of the gallery, anxiously waiting for the arrival of her nephew. Eleven, twelve, one, and two o'clock had struck, and still the nephew came not: her rage and fury were momentarily increasing, when the door opened, and he burst in, saying,—

“My father is dying, and I must be off to Oakham this moment: the carriage is now preparing for me.”

“Nonsense! your father will live long enough to make you a poorer man than you are now; so take my advice, and do not go.”

“But, here is a letter from my poor broken-hearted mother, entreating me to go down to her instantly.”

“One word for all,” replied Lady Julia, authoritatively. “If you choose to leave town in the very height of the season, merely to see an old father, I have done with you for ever; and shall certainly prevail on your uncle to

make somebody with more spirit and pluck than you seem to have, his heir."

"But, Lady Julia," interrupted her terrified nephew.

"There are no 'buts' in the case, sir: here I have been waiting for you these three hours, to tell you how to set to work to catch the richest heiress in town; and the only thing you can think of is, a stupid, old father, who has got through half a dozen attacks of gout already, and will, in all probability, weather this one also. But you can choose for yourself, Mr. Read. Either give up this foolish journey, write a penitent letter to your father, and remain here with me, or ——: but there can be no doubt which you will do. Can you possibly doubt my affection for you?" Here Lady Julia smoothed her ruffled brow; and, laying her arm on his shoulder, continued, in a gentler tone, "Stay with me, dearest boy. I am your best friend." Then, seeing him still waver, she rang the bell: "Desire John to tell Mr. Read's servant, he does not want the carriage this morning." The servant bowed, and left the room. "Now, then, sit

down there," said Lady Julia, "and write a very touching, rhodomontading letter to your venerable parent, which I will send."

The weak, culpable, young man did as he was desired: and yet, as he wrote, his conscience smote him, that he was acting very undutifully by his poor father. He threw down the pen, exclaiming,—

"By Jove! I must go."

But Lady Julia had him too completely under her thumb to mind these little bursts of feeling; so, placing the lighted candle before him, she waited till she saw him sign his name to what he knew full well was but one uninterrupted tissue of lies, and gave it to Lady Julia. This was all she wanted. She felt how completely he was in her power; and, immediately changing her voice and manner, she said,—

"Well, how did you manage last night at the Opera?—was the fair one gracious or cruel?"

Her brow darkened when she heard he had not been able to exchange half a dozen words with Miss Selby; but when her nephew

went on to say how much the sight of Lord Fleetwood seemed to move her, her face brightened, and, merely saying, "Nous verrons à quoi cela est bon," she got up, and took from a packet of letters and papers one little paragraph, which she put into Mr. Read's astonished hands. Perhaps you can guess, gentle reader, what it was that made him start back with amazement : it was the same paragraph that had excited so much surprise and astonishment at Newstead Lodge.

"And in yesterday's paper !" he said, "that was before we had settled anything about the heiress—was it not ?"

"Before *you* had settled anything ; but not before the eyes of the world had done so. You see you must be under my guidance. Without me, you would never have seen this paragraph, and might, perhaps, have been even now paying court to some other fair one : or doing what you were so anxious to do just now — giving lemonade to a sick, old man."

"Well, if every one thinks this poor, little soul so smitten with me, it would be cruel

not to give her a chance," replied the apt scholar, with a foolish laugh: "but what am I to do next? for Miss Selby dines quietly at home this evening."

"Does she? nothing could be more fortunate. You shall take a note from me to her, begging her to accompany us to Almack's."

On the plea of being cousins, Lady Anne Lyndsay accepted the invitation for her grandchild.

At the appointed time, Lady Julia called for Miss Selby; and, as they went towards Almack's, had an opportunity of impressing on the mind of Catherine what an advantage it was to be going with her and her nephew. "No young lady ever dances in town," said Lady Julia, "who is not evidently much sought after: so you see, my dear, you are very fortunate in going with me, for my nephew will be proud to dance with you."

The carriage stopped, and Lady Julia had no more time to throw out hints. Catherine Selby merely settled in her own mind that she was a very odd person; and as to having a young man dangling after her, she did not

see the smallest pleasure or advantage in anything of the kind.

As a matter of course, Mr. Read asked Catherine's hand for the first dance; but great was her astonishment when he said, "I understood from my aunt that I may claim the honour of dancing every dance with you."

"Lady Julia has made some strange mistake," replied Catherine, composedly: though her heightened colour showed but too plainly how annoyed she was. "Lady Julia," she continued, "can never have supposed me capable of flirting in such a way with any one."

Again was Mr. Read thrown completely back on his own resources: but the music of the last quadrille happening then to begin, he thought it advisable to change the subject, and said, "How pretty the music is to-night, Miss Selby!"

"Very," she replied; "I should like extremely to know the name of this set,—it is quite new to me."

"It shall be my business to inquire, and I have no doubt we can easily procure it for you."

The quadrille being over, Catherine proposed to return to that part of the room where she had left Lady Julia Read; but there was no such person to be seen anywhere. Thinking they might have passed her in the crowd, they hurried back again; but the room was so full that they could not move quickly, and before they had gone twenty steps, the orchestra struck up a set of waltzes.

“Oh, I love waltzing!” exclaimed Mr. Read; “do, Miss Selby, as it seems in vain to look for my aunt,—do pray take one turn with me.”

“I would much rather return to Lady Julia, if I could find her.”

“But you see it is quite useless,” replied her persevering partner.

“Well, then, I will take one turn,” replied Catherine.

The waltz being ended, the same difficulty occurred of squeezing through the crowd whilst looking for Lady Julia, and the search proved ally unsuccessful: this was the case for three successive dances. Catherine resolutely

announced her intention of standing still, and was beginning to get extremely irritated and annoyed with her chaperone, when the artful woman made her appearance. She protested she had remained stationary the whole evening, and expressed much surprise that Catherine had not returned to her at once; while to Miss Selby's reiterated assurances, how anxiously she had been wishing to rejoin her, her only answer was,—“My dear, I suppose you were much better engaged, and well amused.”

Her ladyship herself was in high good humour, because all her plans had succeeded so well. She had been pluming herself all the afternoon at having so easily deceived her nephew about the paragraph in the *Morning Post*: for she felt quite sure he had no suspicion whatever that she was the author of it. And now, this evening, she had once or twice been asked if her nephew was engaged to Miss Selby; which report was strongly corroborated in every one's eyes by their dancing together: or rather, by their being seen standing about together between the dances.

Lady Julia, thinking it would not do to weary out Miss Selby the first evening, begged to be allowed to introduce Colonel Selwyn to her. Catherine bowed assent, and the next minute she found herself moving off to join in a quadrille with the gallant colonel. He was, in truth, a gallant man, and looked the soldier who had braved a thousand dangers. He was not regularly handsome, but altogether a striking looking person; much above the common height, with a figure in beautiful proportion. His hair was dark, as were his eye-lashes, which fringed a pair of the blackest eyes: good teeth, and a pleasant voice, made him altogether a very agreeable companion. He had seen much, and could *talk* well,—perhaps, of all talents the rarest; and after having been doomed to listen to the insipid conversation of Mr. Read for a whole hour, it was an unspeakable relief to hear a few words of sense.

Colonel Selwyn had so often heard it remarked by really sensible women, how very common-place and dull officers usually appeared in a ball-room—talking only of the

merest everyday occurrence—the weather, the floor, the music, the lights, and other topics common to this style of amusing conversation—that he studiously avoided everything of the kind. They had not been dancing long, when Catherine asked her partner if he was acquainted with Mr. Lyndsay; adding, that she was staying with him, and that she fancied he had heard her grandfather mention Colonel Selwyn.

“Are you, then, the daughter of that lovely Mrs. Selby who some twenty years ago had all London after her?”

Catherine replied she was.

“Strange!” he began, as if partly musing, “strange that the first time I have danced in England for many years should be with Grace Lyndsay’s daughter.”

“What, did you then know my mother?” cried Catherine.

“Oh! most intimately; and once had hopes that it might have pleased Heaven to realize my brightest dreams. But your father stepped in; and no woman, Miss Selby, could resist one so charming: he was goodness

itself. But here we have got to the end of our quadrille, and I must not detain you any longer, as Mr. Read will think himself aggrieved," he continued, smiling kindly on his fair young partner.

"Oh! pray introduce me to another partner, Colonel Selwyn. I have been pestered the whole evening by Mr. Read, and really cannot endure another dance with him."

"Oh! fie for shame!" returned her partner; "you do not expect me to believe this; so do not take the trouble to abuse *him* who, if report speaks true, is not so indifferent to you as you would have me imagine."

"I cannot make it out," replied Catherine, looking very much distressed; "I only came to town last week, and now people seem to settle, without consulting me, that I must be desperately enamoured with Mr. Read. What it means, I do not know; and I appeal to you, Colonel Selwyn, as an old friend of my mother's, to tell me the rights of the story."

"Willingly," he replied; "but let us move off a little, and get some tea." He was too happy to have an opportunity of talking more

with a young lady who had already captivated him not a little.

The glory of Almack's was then at its *acmé*, and Catherine, in the most animated manner, expressed her admiration of the room, and the brilliancy reflected over every part by the numerous mirrors: it looked to her altogether like a scene in the Arabian Nights. But she was annoyed and vexed, and hurried rapidly into the tea-room. They were soon lost to the eye of Lady Julia and her hopeful nephew, who muttered to himself as he saw Miss Selby move away, "By Jove! she is a fine girl." His aunt smiled to see how easily she could make him turn his thoughts to any one she pleased: for this was not the first time she had tried to make him captivate some fair one. Meanwhile, every step Catherine and her partner took together seemed to make them more at their ease with one another: but she was too much excited by all the hints she heard dropped as they passed along, of her being "la fiancée," "the bride elect," &c. &c., to allow Colonel Selwyn to proceed far without giving her an explanation. Her indignation

and astonishment were excessive, when he told her that a paragraph in the *Morning Post*, said, in so many words, that it was understood she would shortly be united to Mr. Read.

“And who dared,” she exclaimed, indignantly, “to put such a paragraph into the paper? If I had really been an heiress, it might have given people more scope to do ill-natured things; but I should have thought

‘A penniless lass, with a long pedigree,’

like myself, quite beneath other people’s notice. But,” she continued, “are you sure it was in the paper, or are you laughing at me?”

“Far be it from me,” he replied, “to joke with you, Miss Selby, on such an unfortunate report. I say unfortunate, because now every one will call you a flirt, if you do but look at any other young man. But this conceited young Read, I suspect, must have inserted the paragraph himself; or it is his odious aunt’s doing. But I beg your pardon, I believe they are related to you.”

“Oh! pray go on: do not let our relationship—which I rejoice to say is very dis-

tant—be any hindrance to your saying anything of them. I never saw either of them till two or three nights ago, so that we cannot have any great affection for each other; and as for this odious nephew, I never heard that there was such a being in existence till the other day. Nor shall I see any more of them, if Lady Julia means to persecute me in such a way.”

“Well, then,” continued Colonel Selwyn, “I must tell you what I heard young Mr. Read say to a friend about an hour ago: ‘You see, at last I shall catch an heiress: but I have to move heaven and earth to make her marry me.’ These words, I have no doubt, applied to you, Miss Selby: but forgive me, I give you pain.” She waved her hand for him to continue; and he did so, saying, “It is settled between the aunt and nephew that you are to appear everywhere with them, and they will both circulate the absurd report that you are desperately smitten with him: in fact, they intend to get you so entangled with their machinations, that you will be obliged in honour to marry him.”

“ Oh ! how shocking, Colonel Selwyn, how dreadful ! I had better return instantly to the country. London, where I had anticipated so much pleasure, will now be hateful to me.”

“ If I might presume to advise you, Miss Selby, I should say, let not any of the detestable family of Read know you have discovered their plots. Steadily refuse to go out with Lady Julia Read, on the plea of never leaving your grandmother ; to whom tell everything that has occurred. You see,” he continued, smiling, “ I take upon myself the privilege of an old friend : for, perhaps, you are not aware that I have often seen you before, when you were a child.”

Catherine did, indeed, feel most grateful to this amiable man for giving her such good advice ; and the more she reflected upon it, the more absurd the report appeared to her : so that she began to think it would be better to let the whole appear a joke, and not trouble herself about it.

Lady Julia Read soon after, to Catherine’s great delight, announced her intention of re-

turning home. She rejoiced to find herself free from this odious woman; for all the annoyance she had experienced that evening she felt sure was occasioned by her.

CHAPTER VI.

THE day had been unusually hot and oppressive for the time of year—for my readers must remember it was only May — heavy masses of clouds had been rolling towards the west all day, and every leaf was motionless. The cattle looked oppressed with the heat, and stood listlessly about the fields, when towards evening some heavy claps of thunder were heard solemnly rolling in the distance, and everything betokened an approaching storm. Gradually the thunder became nearer, and the lightning more vivid, but no rain fell. Doubtless there were many watching the storm, but those with whom our tale had to do watched it with intense feeling : they were expecting an only son, and thought but of him.

It was in a small bed-room, looking to the east, with the shutters half-closed, that a

woman, past the middle age of life, was seen wringing her hands: tears of agony, wrung from her inmost soul by intense sorrow, followed each other in quick succession down her care-worn cheek; yet no complaint fell from her lips. She seemed by her attitude to be praying—to be imploring help from One who never forsakes His children, but sends comfort even under the greatest misfortunes.

The windows were open, and roses were peeping in, as if by their brightness to mock the colourless cheek of one who in her early days had been called the “black rose.” She evidently was absorbed in prayer, when a faint groan from the further side of the room recalled her to the bed-side. Here, indeed, was a heart-rending sight. On the bed lay a man, who though naturally of a strong frame, was so reduced by constant suffering and disease to such a state of weakness, that you could almost see through the livid hand that was raised to hold the throbbing temples.

“Is he come?” he gently murmured.

Tears were the only reply of the afflicted mother: but still, as if to cheer his dying

moments, she said, "The storm may have delayed him; there are few horses would stand such vivid lightning," and a tremendous burst of thunder, apparently immediately above them, verified the truth of her words.

The invalid shook his head, while a mournful smile came over his pale face, as he murmured, "Thy will be done!" Apparently exhausted with the effort of speaking these few words, he fell back on the pillow. His gentle wife rubbed his cold hand within her own, and implored blessings on his aged head. Still she could not shut her eyes to the danger he was in; medical advice had been procured the day before, but the physician, though clever, had at once declared it quite beyond his power to do anything to save poor Mr. Read. Yes, it was indeed this father, who days before had directed his faithful wife to write to their undutiful son to come and close his dying eyes. She had used every entreaty, every word that the prudent father had dictated, but apparently without success: still he would not give up all hope of seeing him. A dying father's request, he thought, was but rarely neglected. It was more on-

his wife's account than his own, that he so ardently wished for his son's arrival; for at his death she would stand alone, to buffet in her old age against the storms and adversities that are but too often the widow's lot: hard enough for the young and strong to bear, but which seldom fail to bring the hoary head with sorrow to the grave.

The night gradually came on; all trace of the storm was gone, and the stars shone forth in all their glory, like good spirits prepared to receive and take to their eternal rest the souls of those who were passing away. Mrs. Read could not but be struck with the change that the last few hours had wrought in him who had shared her every joy, her every grief, for the last thirty years; and bitterly was her cup of sorrow increased by the thought that a son's neglect and indifference had broken the firm spirit of one whose place no one could supply. But when in the middle of the night she saw her husband dozing a little, she trusted, she hoped—who does not hope even against hope?—that he would awake refreshed. She quietly prepared to watch by his side till the morning.

“Oh, my child, my child!” she mentally exclaimed; “if you only knew how much my future happiness depends on your coming to us at this moment, nothing would keep you away. You used to be fond of your mother; and, as a child, declare you would never leave her: but those bright days are gone, and corrupted by evil example—without strength of mind and firmness of character to resist—you are made the tool of a bad, designing woman.”

These, and reflections bitter as these, effectually drove all sleep from her eyes. Of all the dreadful trials and sorrows that are encountered in this world, none can equal in intensity the pang that is given by an undutiful child to a parent’s heart. That one who in infancy and childhood was quite dependent on a parent’s care, should in manhood cease to think of those kind parents, would be almost beyond belief, did we not but too often see examples of it around us.

Towards morning, worn out by continual watching, Mrs. Read slept for a few hours, but was soon awakened by the servant giving her a letter. Her hand trembled so violently that she

could scarcely open it; and then bitter and cruel was her disappointment to find that it came from her only son: "he regretted extremely he could not tear himself away from his gaiety and friends, but he trusted in a few days to receive from his mother a better account, and begged to hear again."

The slight noise made by opening the door aroused the sick man, and he started up, exclaiming, "Is Augustus come?"

Mrs. Read's heart beat nearly to bursting as she was obliged to reply, "He has delayed his coming, my dearest husband. He thinks, he trusts, my fears are groundless; and hopes soon to hear a better account."

"Do not let this deceive you, my love," said he, trying to take her hand in his: but his hand was too feeble, and he could not lift it from the bed. "I feel," he continued, "that in a few short hours I shall have passed away. But it is only a separation for a few, a very few years, and then we shall meet again never to be parted. Oh, my son," he added, "may your last hours never be embittered by the neglect of an undutiful child! may you never

know what a father feels when, on his death-bed, he leaves his widow alone in the wide world!" It was some minutes before he could recover himself, and then he said, in a calmer tone, "Send, my love, to Mr. Fisher; I must receive the sacrament again before I die."

Calmly Mrs. Read gave orders to this effect, and waited in silence the arrival of the holy man who would comfort and give them support in this trying hour: for he was one who followed his Divine Master's example, and went about doing good.

The moment he arrived, he prepared to administer the holy sacrament, for he saw that life was ebbing fast. Scarcely had he finished, when the dying man said:—

"I commend my wife to your care. Watch, I entreat you, over her declining years, and see that she is comfortably settled in this cottage till the day of her death. And now, farewell, my dear friend! Leave us alone together for the last few moments of my life."

The clergyman silently prepared to depart, deeply overcome at this sad sight. There

is something peculiarly solemn in the chamber of a dying person: the subdued light,—the ghastly paleness of those who are nursing the sick, and the still more livid hue of the sick themselves: the thought that in a few hours that body, now sensible to all around, will be cold and lifeless:—oh! if these are not thoughts to make us all tremble, and strive to do good in our generation, woe be to us!

* * * * *

A veil must be drawn over the last scene between this afflicted pair: the only words which transpired were the dying man's parting blessing and entire forgiveness of his guilty son. It was all over: life was extinct; and all that remained on earth of that once fine and manly form, was a cold corpse.

Mrs. Read was stunned with grief: the servants carried her into an adjoining room. Everything was left to Mr. Fisher's direction; and charitably and kindly he arranged all. The unhappy widow remained insensible for ten days, and then began to feel, in all its acuteness, the terrible loss she had sustained.

But what was her son about all this time,

during the sad events we have had to record in this chapter?—He was flirting and dancing at Almack's, totally regardless of everything belonging to his parents. Two days after this, he received a letter from Mr. Fisher, giving all the details, saying he had arranged that the funeral should take place on the following Friday, and wishing to know if Mr. Read would attend. After describing the state his mother was in, he made some very strong reflections and remonstrances on his undutiful conduct, and begged him, without fail, to come and see his mother.

Mr. Read burst into a flood of tears. "I had no idea that he was so ill: that he would have gone so soon. I would have run down if I could have foreseen this; indeed I should, if it had not been for my aunt. How my poor mother will miss him! It was very unlucky that I was so particularly engaged when they wrote to me, or I certainly would have gone. I do not think that I can be of any use to my poor mother now. How she will miss him!—I wish I had not so many engagements on my list. I do not see how I

can put them off: it would look so strange; and, what's more, perhaps, mar all my prospects. At all events, I will take a ride in the park to-day, as the poor old gentleman's death cannot be known yet."

CHAPTER VII.

LADY ANNE LYNDSEY was not surprised to hear of the favourable impression Colonel Selwyn had made on her grand-daughter, and secretly wished it might, to use a homely phrase, "lead to something."

The next week they were engaged out every night; and at every place Catherine looked about most eagerly to see if Colonel Selwyn was of the party: but he was never to be seen. When her thoughts were quite diverted from him by the dangerous illness of her grandmother, she reproached herself over and over again with being the cause, by having disturbed the usual quiet routine of her life; but these fears were soon happily removed, for by the aid of the best medical advice, one week saw her ladyship sufficiently recovered to be able to move down stairs. She would not

think of allowing that her illness was caused by her going out with her favourite granddaughter; and, as a proof of it, said they must prepare for the drawing-room which was to take place the following week.

Catherine Selby, in common with most of her sex, or at least the junior members, entertained the most enthusiastic feelings toward the youthful Queen who had lately ascended the throne. She had, from earliest infancy, been taught to revere the anointed Sovereign of the British Isles; and, her mother having been a personal friend of the Queen's, she had the greatest longing to see her. It was therefore with much alacrity, that she prepared for the approaching drawing-room: she ran in and out of her room fifty times to look at the beautiful train prepared for her. It was rich white satin, looped up with white roses.

Her pleasure was like that of a child with a new toy; and her grandmother was equally pleased at seeing her so happy: it reminded her of the time when she introduced Catherine's mother, who also was pleased with everything and everybody.

The important day arrived, and Catherine got through the awful ceremony very well; for directly the Queen saw her, she smiled so graciously that Catherine felt quite encouraged, and was even almost sorry when it was over. Catherine longed to hear Her Majesty speak,—for the fame of her silver-toned voice was spread far and wide; but she was destined to be disappointed.

The next day, Lady Anne and her granddaughter were summoned to the palace to a private audience; and great was Catherine's surprise, when the Queen observed, in the kindest mannner possible, that she wished to have an interview with her in order to ascertain whether it would be agreeable to her to accept the appointment of maid of honour. So great was her astonishment, she could scarcely reply, but at length stammered out something about being delighted.

"Very well, then," replied her Majesty, "you can succeed Miss ——, who is to be married next week. You will not always, I trust," she said, smiling at Catherine, "appear so frightened at me; for I want to

have some one near me who will love me for my own sake, and not merely because I happen to be a queen."

Catherine did not reply, but thought whether it was possible for any one to see a young girl, hardly nineteen, placed in such an elevated position, without feeling the greatest interest for her. Her thoughts shone in her dark eyes, and the Queen, guessing them, said,—“I need not ask anything more. I hope I see that you already begin to love me;” and she held out her hand for Catherine to kiss.

As they returned home, Lady Anne warmly congratulated Catherine on her good fortune, saying, it had always been the height of her ambition to see her grand-daughter in her Majesty's household.

The appointment was soon made public, and excited the usual remarks of envious and ill-natured people, and the wonder that some one else had not been the favoured one. Not a few were uttered by Lady Julia Read; who saw that Catherine would be now taken completely out of her reach, unless her nephew could make up his mind to propose at once:

for it never seemed to occur to her that any girl would refuse ten thousand a year *in prospectu*. But though Mr. Read had a tolerable share of assurance, Miss Selby's manner had been so cold to him lately, ever since, indeed, he had been with her to Almack's, that he did not like actually—to use his own expression—“popping the question.” But the difficulties that were to be got over, only stimulated Lady Julia Read to greater exertions; and she accordingly made up her mind to try what the inserting another paragraph in the paper would do:—saying that the 27th was the day fixed for the marriage of Mr. Read to Miss Selby; and enumerating the balls and breakfasts that were to be given on the interesting occasion. Her ladyship foresaw that most probably this would bring matters to a crisis by congratulatory letters pouring in on all sides: she did not reckon upon a girl of seventeen persisting in saying “*No*,” when all the world had been given to understand she had previously said “*Yes*,” and who if she did not marry her nephew, would induce many to take his part, thinking that the young

lady had jilted him. She merely begged her nephew to keep his own counsel for the next few days, and then, perhaps, matters would be settled. He was so deeply in debt to tailors and horse-dealers, that, as his aunt impressed on his weak mind, he must either submit to marry Miss Selby, or leave London instantly for the Continent. "I have no money to give you," she continued; "and you might as well talk of flying over the moon as getting a sixpence from that prince of *screws*, your uncle, my right worthy husband."

He knew too well that she spoke the truth, and that he was quite in her power; for since his father's death he had received no money: indeed there was none to receive: the little property that there was attached to the cottage at Oakham having been left to the widow, and so tied up by the settlements that he could not touch a penny of it without her knowledge. He had never taken the trouble to make any inquiries about Miss Selby's fortune:—he had taken it for granted that she was the heiress his aunt reported her

to be, and therefore would be most acceptable in the present reduced state of his finances.

“Shall I propose to-day?” he exclaimed, turning suddenly towards his companion, who was apparently lost in a reverie of bitter thoughts.

“No,” she replied, “not to-day; if you do, you will ruin all. You can go to Grosvenor-street, and inquire after her ladyship; say that I have got a bad headache, but hope it will be better if they will all dine here to-night at eight o’clock; and do not fail to congratulate the lucky girl on being made a maid of honour. Do you know,” she continued, tapping him on the shoulder, “your wife will be the Honourable Mrs. Read? and though, of course, that is nothing like Lady Julia Read, still it will give here some consequence. Besides, the Queen has taken her up so warmly, she may be enabled to get you some situation under government, which will bring in a few more hundreds: for you have not forgotten, if this marriage takes place, that you have promised to lend me 500*l*.”

“Indeed, I never promised anything of the

kind," retorted the nephew, getting crimson at the bare idea of such an act of generosity on his part.

"Wait a moment, and we will see who is in the right," replied Lady Julia, thoroughly unmoved at this attempt at rage on her nephew's part,—“wait a moment, and you will see then that I am not in the habit of asserting things which I cannot prove.”

Mr. Read's heart misgave him when he saw her go to the drawer of a bureau, where she always kept her papers. He saw that he should have to give way to her. Once, indeed, some glimmerings of offended spirit shot through his mind, and he resolved to shake off this dependence on a woman whom he had once liked, but now despised and feared.

“This, I believe, Mr. Read,” said Lady Julia, speaking in her haughtiest manner,—“this, I believe, is the bond you gave me for 500*l.*; but if you wish to cancel it, do so—say but one word, it shall be torn up, and you will leave this house, never to appear in it again.”

“Oh, no! I have no wish to cancel it;”—the thoughts of losing the run of this good

house, all the good dinners, and savoury ragouts completely turning his head—"oh, no, I always meant to give it you, only I hoped you had no bond, that I might give it you as my own free act, the moment I was married."

"Well, I am glad to see you have returned to your senses. And now, pray, go and call in Grosvenor-street."

But before we proceed with him there, we must inquire what had been taking place amongst our friends in Grosvenor-street, since we left them after their return from the palace. Catherine was playing on the pianoforte the following morning, when the letters arrived, and was utterly amazed, when the servant said, "They are all for you, ma'am."

"All!" she exclaimed, thinking the man was dreaming. He bowed, and placing them close to her, left the room. One, two, three—thirteen—she counted. What they all contained, she could not conceive, and, jumping up, she ran with them into her grandmother's room. The latter had gone to speak to her husband; so turning over all the letters, Catherine first opened one from her father

and mother, rejoicing very much to hear of her appointment as maid of honour, and giving her, at the same time, some very good advice, which Catherine vowed, in her inmost soul, to follow. Scarcely had she finished reading this home letter, when Lady Anne returned; and she immediately gave it to her to read, exclaiming, "Look!—do look, granny!—here are a dozen letters come for me—what can they be about?"

"I am sure, my love, I have not the slightest idea; but open them, and let us see what they contain."

She had scarcely read the first sheet, when she burst out laughing, exclaiming, "It is from my brother Mortimer, who says he hears I am going to be married, and sends me a good lecture on the blessings of a silent wife. He has always laughed at me for talking so much, dear fellow; yet I am half angry with him, for thinking I could possibly have any idea of marriage, without his knowing it."

One after the other she opened, and at last became exceedingly annoyed at finding they were all written with the idea she was on the eve of being married. "And who do

you think, grandmama, they have pitched upon as the happy man? Why, that little hop-o'-my-thumb Mr. Read, whom I scarcely know, and dislike so much."

"It is very strange: what could have given rise to this report?" replied Lady Anne Lyndsay. "I cannot imagine, Catherine, that you have deceived me, and have received any more attentions than you mentioned from Mr. Read, the night you were at Almack's;" and she steadily watched her grandchild, to see if there was any change of countenance: but there was none.

Catherine again repeated all that had passed in the clearest manner, and when she had finished, Lady Anne pressed her most affectionately to her heart, saying, that "She had never, for one single instant, suspected anything had gone wrong: only it was quite necessary, dearest girl," she continued, "that you should feel quite positive of what he did say to you."

Her ladyship was somewhat surprised at colonel Selwyn having said, that if he remained longer with Miss Selby, Mr. Read

would think himself aggrieved : for she knew he was far above all those odious pretty speeches which some men think themselves at liberty to make to every girl. She instantly determined to send and ask Colonel Selwyn to call immediately on her, without mentioning to him anything that had passed. Great was her disappointment when an answer was returned that Colonel Selwyn had left London three days ago for the north of England, and was not expected to return for some time. Mr. Lyndsay had just gone out of town also ; so that our heroine and Lady Anne were in a regular *quandary*. They were in deep consultation when the servant entered and announced that Mr. Read was in the drawing-room, and wished to see her ladyship. More annoyed than she cared to let the faithful Parker discover, she requested Mr. Read would call again, as she was then particularly engaged. But he returned for answer, that his business was of the most urgent kind, and begged that if he could not see Lady Anne he might be permitted to see Miss Selby. *This* Lady Anne felt to be quite out of the

question; so saying she would be with him directly, the servant withdrew.

“And now, my love,” she said, turning to Catherine, who was seated on the footstool at her feet, “I have not the smallest doubt he is come to propose to you. What is your answer to be, Yes or No?”

“Oh, No! No! a most decided *No*!” cried Catherine; “and let him understand that if ever I had felt a liking for him, which is far from being the case, his having spread this report—for I feel positive it is all his doing—would quite prevent my ever speaking to him again.”

“You are quite right, my love: remain here till I return.”

It appeared to Catherine as if her grandmother never did mean to return. More than an hour had elapsed since she had left her, and still she could not hear a sound of her return. At length her quick, decided step was heard on the staircase, and in a few minutes she appeared, looking very pale and fatigued. Throwing herself into an arm-chair, she said, “You have need, dearest girl,

of all your courage, all your sweetness of temper, to listen with common patience to what I have just heard." She then proceeded to tell her that Mr. Read had met her at the door of the drawing-room; saying, that as he came by the appointment of Miss Selby, he felt sure of being welcomed by her grandmother; particularly as he came to ask her consent to what her lovely grand-daughter had already promised, namely, to give him her hand."

Here Catherine started up, exclaiming, "What a wretch! He never even asked me! and if he had, does he think I would ever marry one so utterly worthless as to be capable of inventing such a tissue of untruths?"

"Patience, dearest child, and hear to the end of my story: though no wonder your young blood boils with indignation. He then told me that at Almack's you solemnly vowed you would never marry any other man; and, in fine, he says, the marriage settlements are being drawn up, and only wait your signature."

“Which they shall never have, as long as I have any sense left. Never will I consent to marry a man who, having spent all his own fortune, expects to find me an heiress, and that my fortune will pay his debts and will support him. The pitiful ‘wretch!’ how I despise him. And now you see, my dear granny, how right Colonel Selwyn was as to his ideas of young Read spreading these reports himself. But I wish now it had been contradicted at first.”

“No, Catherine, that could not be; it would have made your name too public. Though I repeatedly assured Mr. Read you would never accept him, and begged him, if he had any regard for you whatever, to let the subject drop and leave town for a short time. He would not hear of such a thing, but positively insisted that till he heard the fatal ‘No’ from your own lips, he would not give up all hope.”

“And must I then see him again?” said Catherine, colouring with vexation at the idea.

“I see no other way of getting rid of him,

my dear ; though my heart aches to think how disagreeable it will be to you. This evening, at six o'clock, he intends calling. I will then retire into the small drawing-room and leave you two together. Do not let him see a trace of agitation in your manner or looks : be as cool to him as you possibly can, and very decided ; let him see that there is no hope for him whatever. I need hardly add how terribly grieved all your family would have been, had you fancied such a horror. And now, my love, this is likely to prove a busy day to you, for you must write to your brother, and also to those officious young ladies who have written to you : say that you know not how the report has originated, as Mr. Read has only been in your company half a dozen times ; that he is perfectly indifferent to you, and has not even proposed to you. Write at once :—for if you wait till this evening you cannot say so. Next week, I grieve to think, I shall lose you : and yet it is very fortunate, for we shall meet constantly, and you will be enabled to escape from Mr. Read, which you could hardly do did you remain here with me."

Catherine proceeded to do as she was desired : though she could not but feel nervous at the thoughts of the disagreeable interview she was to encounter that afternoon. Her grandmother felt deeply for her, and most indignant with Lady Julia Read ; for she felt certain that her nephew was only a tool in her hands.

“ But I forgot to send for the *Morning Post*,” said she, aloud, “ which I will do instantly, and see what the paragraph is that has given you all this trouble.” When she saw that Mr. Read had not only formally announced his marriage, but fixed the day, she felt strongly tempted to send him a note to deny him the house for the future. How a young man could expect any girl to marry him after such great want of delicacy, was inexplicable to her ; and she felt more grieved than she cared to acknowledge to her grand-daughter, at this public avowal of a marriage which was unknown to the lady herself. She once thought of sending Catherine from town ; but reflected that if she did so, people would infallibly be good natured

enough to say that Miss Selby had gone into the country because her family would not suffer her to marry Mr. Read.

This worthy lover did not care to inform his aunt of the result of his morning's interview; only appearing pleased and happy, he said he was to see Miss Selby at six o'clock that evening by appointment. This was all she cared to know; for on that very day she had been pressed for payment of several heavy bills, which she hoped her nephew's five hundred pounds would discharge. His future happiness was quite indifferent to her, could she only secure the money.

Such is too frequently the friendship of the world: everybody pursuing their own end, never thinking of the golden rule of doing as they would be done by. Her ladyship felt no compunction as she reflected that when her nephew had first been introduced by her into the world, he was an open-hearted, confiding youth; but that now, by her artful instructions, together with the still more powerful force of bad example, he had become a profligate spendthrift.

CHAPTER VIII.

IT was in one of the narrow streets that lead from the Strand to the river, that a gentleman walking along was struck by the singular appearance of a woman who begged of him. He fancied he could recognise the voice : but where he had seen her, or who she was, he could not remember in the slightest degree. Her dress, though dirty and ragged, showed evidently that it had seen better days, for lace and fringe bedizened the upper parts, and the remains of what had been fine silk stockings hung in rags about her feet. She held by the hand a sickly boy, whose pale and haggard face showed how much he had already suffered, though he could not have numbered more than eight summers.

Oh ! of all the dreadful melancholy sights that sicken the human mind, there is none so terrible,

so overpowering, as to see children (who seem in their early years born for joy and happiness) wasting away with misery and want—their little hands pale, thin, and bony; evident proofs that early sorrow has even then wrinkled their brows, and engraven deep lines of care on their innocent little faces. If those who have never known what care and want is,—if those who from earliest infancy have been accustomed to every indulgence, would but think on the miserable lot of thousands—ay, millions of children, that throng our streets, and would give up some trifling luxury for their sake, and would endeavour to make them Christians indeed,—far, far happier would be the lot of all the community; for the rich would not miss their pittance, and the poor would gain unspeakable benefits. But let it not be supposed that these remarks are made in bitterness of spirit,—far from it. England is justly proud of her charities: of the innumerable charitable institutions scattered, with an unsparing hand, through the whole length and breadth of the land, for the benefit of the poor. Still more, much more might be done by one and all of

us, if we would only make up our minds to sacrifice one of our many thousand needless luxuries, for the good of those who really stand in need of the necessities of life.

Mr. Brown was, in fact, one of those who said little about his good deeds, but who went about doing good. He was very rich,—one of the richest merchants in the city; and yet the half of his income he gave to the poor. Never did the distressed cry to him in vain; and he stopped immediately that this woman begged. He was struck with her manner, the tone of voice and slightly foreign accent were so different from the usual style of ordinary beggars, that he could not forbear asking her whence she came, and where she was living.

“In the streets, sir,” she replied with bitterness; “in the streets, and God only knows where my poor child will rest to-night. But it is a sad history from beginning to end.”

“Perhaps I can help you, my good woman. What is your name?”

“My name is Read, sir,” she replied; “and this is the first time in my life that I ever

asked alms of any one. Much rather would I have died in the streets than have done so now, if I had not hoped that you, sir, would have remembered me. My name is Read."

"Read," said Mr. Brown, musing; "the name seems familiar to me, and yet I cannot recall to my mind where I knew you."

"Ah, that is likely enough, sir: but perhaps you may remember, four years ago, a young man buying a pair of horses of you for his wife to drive. I was young and handsome then: but two years of want and misery have altered me woefully, and turned my hair prematurely gray; and I am not surprised that in the faded form before you, you cannot recognize the strong and rosy Maria Andrea."

"Maria Andrea!—is it indeed you?" exclaimed Mr. Brown; "why, my child, you are indeed altered! yet just at the time I was listening to you, I felt drawn by some irresistible impulse towards you. But your husband—what can have happened? I thought you were both far away from this place. Stay," he continued; "we will ask for shelter in this clean-looking lodging-house."

While they are demanding admittance, we will inform our readers of a few facts connected with this deserted female. To make her history intelligible to our readers, we must first give a slight sketch of her parents.

Her mother, sister to this rich merchant Mr. Brown, had possessed surpassing beauty. The dazzling brilliancy of her complexion, the softness of her lustrous eyes, her sweet expression, formed a model of such rare beauty as would have excited the admiration of the most fastidious. It was beauty of the highest order; it spoke of religious fervour, of intellectual power: it was more, that which is so highly appreciated by refined minds, rather than by those cast in a coarser mould.

Mr. Brown was much connected with some Spanish merchants; and at the time when this fair girl was in the prime of youth and beauty, a young Spaniard, Antonio Andrea, was an inmate in his house, on business of great importance. Our victorious arms were aiding the crushed and broken-hearted Spaniards to rise up against their cruel conquerors. Large sums of money were neces-

sary for this purpose, and this young man's object was to prevail on Mr. Brown to lend them a very large sum. He hesitated : there was no security. Day after day Antonio was thrown more and more with the lovely Alice ; day after day slipped away, and they unconsciously became attached to each other ; till at length when Mr. Brown consented to furnish the amount required, and announced to Don Antonio that he might return to his sunny clime, great was his astonishment to hear from him of his predilection for his sister. Immersed in more weighty cares, he had not remarked their growing attachment ; and now that he was made aware of it, strenuously opposed it, and urged his sister most earnestly to reflect before she took such a hazardous step. All his old-fashioned English prejudices militated against what to him appeared such an incongruous union. " But wilful woman will have her way !" and before the month was over Alice had bestowed herself on this " Spanish adventurer," as her brother had once termed him. He was one whom most women would have found it difficult to refuse. Hand-

some and insinuating, with that polished gentleness of manners which appears innate in the natives of southern climes, he was formed to captivate; and in marrying him, Alice proved what so frequently happens, that no one can judge for another what will form their happiness. He made an excellent husband, and an affectionate father to the only child that their union was blessed with.

Alice was an enthusiastic admirer of all that was lovely in nature; and, as she wandered with her husband through groves of orange trees, loaded with their fragrant fruit and blossoms, she could not but acknowledge that she had never witnessed before anything so enchanting. The brilliant flowers of the jasmine were hanging in rich festoons around; countless numbers of bright and, to her, unknown flowers clustered on all sides; and as she dwelt on the beauties of her adopted country, she gave, unconsciously perhaps to herself, Hispania a decided preference to the land of her birth: silently she felt that, let cynics say what they might, this is a lovely world. Then, at other times, when the

queen of night was shedding her mellow, entrancing light around, softening and blending all harsh lines into an harmonious whole, she would listen with rapturous delight to her Antonio's rich tone, as he warbled a soft air, accompanying himself on the guitar; and confessed, indeed, with tearful emotion, that hers was a blest and happy lot. Every hour increased the charms of their little daughter. Nothing was wanting to complete their happiness: the trumpet of war had not reached their peaceful home. Alas! alas! that such a bright scene should ever have become clouded. But "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards;" and their happy *menage* was shortly to be changed.

Antonio Andrea was the youngest brother of Pedro Andrea, the head of a large mercantile establishment; he was extensively engaged in trading to America. His fortune was increasing; and, in an evil hour, he had persuaded Antonio to embark his all in a speculation. It failed: the rich galleon, in returning from America, was captured by the enemy; and both brothers were suddenly

reduced to want and distress. Naturally, perhaps, rather given to despond, Antonio felt this blow deeply; the more so, because he had till that moment enjoyed competence. Nevertheless, his Alice still comforted him. She still smiled as devotedly upon him as before, and cheerfully acquiesced in every sacrifice it was deemed necessary for them to make. But heavier trials and afflictions awaited her—trials that were, indeed, enough to break a woman's heart. To a man, the Spaniards had revolted against their savage oppressors. Full of enthusiasm, Antonio joined a guerilla band that had collected in his neighbourhood. Deeply as he grieved at leaving his wife and child,—deeply as he had felt his loss,—all was secondary to the feelings of intense hatred that he bore to the French, the authors of all their private and public calamities; and gladly he drew his sword in the defence of his native land.

* * * * *

Three weeks had passed; and Alice was one night aroused by hearing footsteps approaching their dwelling. It was the trampling of

many men; and her heart fainted within her, as she thought it might be some of the detested French. She listened attentively—the steps ceased—there was a dead pause—all was still! With tottering steps she hastened to the window. It was a night formed for pure and holy thoughts: the moon was shedding a mild light around. But Alice stopped not to dwell on beauties which, at another time, would have charmed her. At the gateway, she saw some men, who, by their habiliments, she recognised as her husband's compatriots. With a joyful exclamation, she threw her mantle round her, and rushed to the entrance door. Her trembling hands almost refused to give her strength to open it. At length it yielded to her pressure—she stood on the lawn. With hasty steps, she rushed to the little band of men. Not a word was spoken. A thrilling presentiment of evil shot through her excited brain. “My husband!” she exclaimed, and fell fainting on the green sward. With prompt kindness, two young men hastened to raise her, and carry her into the house. The whole establish-

ment was by this time aroused, and the unfortunate Alice was again restored to consciousness : but it was to a consciousness of indescribable misery : her husband was no more ; and she and her child were left alone and unfriended in a foreign land. Weeks passed away, and still she remained so ill that fears were entertained for her recovery ; but the caresses of her little Maria, gradually taught her she had still claims upon her in this life. She roused herself, and applied to her mother-in-law for assistance, which was generously given. After many and great dangers, owing to the then unsettled state of the country, she and her child obtained a passage in a merchant vessel, and arrived safely in the British metropolis.

The excitement that had hitherto enabled the unfortunate widow to bear up against her fearful trial, ceased when she reached her brother's hospitable mansion. Consigning her lovely child to his care and protection, she quickly sunk into the cold grave—broken-hearted. And most conscientiously did her brother fulfil the part of a father to his bereaved niece. The child was reared with

the tenderest care, and enjoyed every advantage that wealth and affection could give her. She was highly accomplished, and at seventeen he had placed her at the head of his well-ordered establishment. Her lot was a comparatively happy one; but, though fondly attached to her uncle, Maria yet longed for some companion more suited to her in age, whose tastes and pursuits would accord with her own. She had not many acquaintances. Possibly this was occasioned by her coldness of manner: for she was slightly reserved to people in general; but as it was generally reported that she would succeed to her uncle's property, this reserve was no bar to the manœuvring advances of those who looked a little beforehand.

There was a good-looking young man, who lately had much frequented Mr. Brown's house. He was one of those who had heard this report, and fully believed that it must be true. He had great powers of pleasing, when he chose to exert them. Maria had never met with so ardent an admirer before, and bestowed on him the warmth of her first love

—that love which is too often so little prized ! He was accomplished, and if deficient in depth of character, Maria, or Mary as he called her, perceived it not. She was devotedly attached to him, and he apparently returned it equally.

Deeply did she grieve at leaving her uncle—her more than father : full well she knew how much he would feel the want of her society. Though he was far too unselfish ever to urge this motive for refusing to give his consent to her becoming the bride of Mr. Read—whom she judged she had chosen for her own happiness—her uncle cautioned her to postpone her marriage till she was rather better acquainted with him : he thought matters had been settled a little too precipitately, but could not reasonably make any objection. Though not rich at present, the young man gave out he was to succeed his uncle in the possession of a fine estate. His uncle, he said, was abroad, and his own parents were dead ; so that he should devote himself entirely to his fascinating bride.

For a few months he did so : but then he

began to get weary of her. He felt vexed at not having received at once so large a fortune as he had anticipated. He frequented the gaming table: she saw him but seldom. Her sorrows began early in life. Keenly did she feel his bitter neglect of her—whom he had solemnly vowed to protect and love.

After one short year had passed over her head, poor Mary would, no doubt, have unhesitatingly acknowledged that she had married hastily. The hopes she had formed that after the birth of their child he would have shown her more affection, were cruelly blighted: vainly had she trusted that this first tie would have attached him to his home. They had lived ever since their marriage in a small house in Brook-street. Latterly, his manner had become strange and reserved: he would be absent sometimes for days,—sometimes for weeks, and at last for months, without assigning any cause. She could not but entertain the most poignant alarms lest these absences should be for bad purposes, of which he was ashamed, and with which he did not think fit to make her ac-

quainted. Moreover, he neglected to supply her with the means of procuring any of the comforts she had formerly enjoyed; indeed, he often left her with barely sufficient funds to procure the common necessities of life.

We have before said, that on his marriage, this profligate man had declared himself an orphan; and having once deceived her, he had, from that time, designedly kept her in ignorance of his relations and connections, so that in the hour of distress there were none to whom she could apply for assistance. But even in her greatest distress, she could not bring herself to believe that he would ever desert her. She clung to him with woman's firm love, which survives long after all hope has fled. She recovered but slowly from her confinement, and ever after looked an altered person. Her uncle had gone abroad a few months previously. There was no one of whom she could ask for aid.

After an absence of six months, she one day received a long letter from her husband, saying, that as he was sure he never could live comfortably with her, he thought they had

better separate: but he alleged no reason for his determination. He said he had settled one hundred pounds a year on her; which he hoped would suffice for herself and the child. This was, indeed, a bitter trial: at the age of nineteen to be deserted and cast off! Though for months past she had perceived he had ceased to care but little for her; still she had always clung to the hope that he would return.

The letter bore no date. She was overwhelmed with despair,—but there was no remedy. She resolved, by the strictest economy, to make this miserable pittance of one hundred a year, suffice; and proceeded to dispose of all her goods which she could possibly part with. Her child was her only comfort; and for his sake she exerted herself to bear these heavy trials, and managed to exist in this way for four years: when she received another letter, without date, saying, “that for the future her allowance would be stopped!” It required all her courage—all her firm reliance on Providence, to enable her to support herself under this second reverse.

She struggled on, by dint of slaving day and night at needlework, for some months; but her earnings were the merest trifle. The incessant labour was too much for her: doing fine work at night affected her eyesight, and at length she became too ill to do any kind of needlework at all. Her landlady allowed her to remain where she was till she recovered. Driven to despair at last, she sallied forth in hopes of meeting with some charitable person who would relieve her. At last, when nearly exhausted, she providentially encountered Mr. Brown.

As Mary finished this heart-rending recital, her feelings overpowered her, and she fainted away. Her poor little companion set up a most piteous cry, thinking that his mother was dead: but after she had revived, Mr. Brown insisted on her returning to his house. She objected strongly at first, and when he urged it she said, "Let me, my dear sir, remain here till I have procured some decent clothes to appear in. It will not do for your niece to appear at your door as a beggar. This old woman seems kind, and will help me to get

some necessary things ; after which, my dear uncle, I shall thankfully avail myself of your kind offer of an asylum for myself and child. But one thing you must promise me,”—and the blood mantled in her pale cheek as she bent over him and whispered ; “let me beseech you to promise one thing—let me beg that you will, on no account, endeavour to discover the retreat of my husband. He lives, I believe : but do not oblige me, I entreat you, ever to receive him again : he has done all in his power to embitter my days. May God forgive him, as I do.”

The required promise was given, and Mr. Brown took his leave.

CHAPTER IX.

THE hour had arrived in which Mr. Read was to have an interview with Miss Selby.

It is appalling to imagine such depravity as his; and yet such has occurred before, within our recollection. His feelings must have been none of the pleasantest as he arrived at Mr. Lyndsay's. He must have been conscious of the villany he was perpetrating: of the infamy of which he was guilty. If such were his thoughts, they deterred him not, and he walked up to the door with bold assurance.

Catherine's dread of his visit had not diminished during the many hours that had elapsed since his morning call: at the sound of his footsteps ascending the stairs, she felt her cheeks glow with a bright carnation hue; and her manner, as he entered, became

slightly agitated. Quickly recovering herself, she received Mr. Read with polite coldness. Lady Anne, after bowing in the most distant manner, retired, as before agreed, into the inner drawing-room.

An awkward silence succeeded, broken at length, by Mr. Read's saying,—

“After the cruel manner in which Lady Anne repulsed me this morning, you may conceive my distracting anxiety to receive from you an assurance that I was not mistaken in supposing myself your accepted lover.” Receiving no answer from the lady, after a little coughing and hesitation, he proceeded in the usual strain—declared from the first moment that the light of Miss Selby's eyes had beamed upon him, he had become deeply *inamorato*—vowed eternal, unchanging constancy—never ceasing devotion; and conjured her, as she valued his life, or happiness, to consent to become his bride.

She here attempted to interrupt him, but without effect. He spoke of his fortune, as likely to be considerable; of his personal charms, as not *inconsiderable*; declared re-

peatedly her slightest wish should be heeded : his every thought devoted to make her happy—to make her life one of continual round of pleasure and sunshine. Catherine heard him with amazement : his whole tone spoke more of conferring than receiving a favour. Having now exhausted his rhetoric, he remained silent.

Catherine then rose with dignity, and in the gentlest but firmest way, thanked him for the honour he had done her ; begged to decline all further allusion to the subject ; and said plainly that, even if she had been better acquainted with him, the strange way in which her name had twice been coupled with his and inserted in the public papers, without her knowledge or consent—without, in fact, such a thing having ever crossed her mind,—must place a barrier between them which no after circumstances could alter. She therefore hoped the subject might never be again mentioned.

She was preparing to leave the room, when Mr. Read suddenly turned round, and looking her full in the face, said, “ If you think to

catch Selwyn, you are mistaken ; he is gone into the country to be married."

Then, indeed, her indignation was roused : that any man, a perfect stranger a week ago, should presume to speak thus to her ! She felt so angry that for one moment she was afraid of speaking ; dreading to show how much she was moved. Mr. Read saw her embarrassment, and imagining it to proceed from regard to Colonel Selwyn, was instantly filled with the blackest hatred to him : whom he felt sure was his rival in Miss Selby's good graces.

"Leave me, sir !" said Miss Selby, with dignity—"leave me, and let me forget that I have ever known you."

"Forget me you shall not," replied her persecutor, furious with her quiet but firm denial ; "you shall hear more of this, and be taught to take care how you refuse one of the *finest* young men about town ! Am I to take your answer as a positive denial ?" he added.

"You are, sir ; as a positive refusal, which no circumstances can alter," replied Catherine.

He then got up and left the room, muttering vengeance and rage against Catherine and Colonel Selwyn.

As to poor Catherine it was an unspeakable relief to her when she heard the house-door shut; and she trusted that henceforth she would not be troubled with his impertinence. She rushed into her grandmother's room, exclaiming, "He is gone—he is gone, dearest granny, and I trust for ever." She then repeated all that had passed between them.

Lady Anne Lyndsay's indignation was excited at the insolence of the man, in daring to speak to her grand-daughter in such terms of Colonel Selwyn; and ringing the bell, she gave orders that no visitors were to be admitted that evening on any plea whatever.

Scarcely had she recovered her composure, when the servant appeared saying, "that Lady Julia Read was at the door and begged to see her ladyship." This was too much: so Lady Anne Lyndsay desired her footman to say she was engaged, and, therefore, could not admit any visitors. But this persevering lady had provided for such an emergency, and

again sent up a note to beg they would all dine with her that evening, *en famille*: her nephew having forgotten (in his rage) to deliver the message. The note was written in the most affectionate style, and concluded with "kindest love to Miss Selby, who, she must know, had quite captivated and won her heart."

In reply to all this rigmarole, Lady Anne Lyndsay wrote one line, to say she regretted that it was not in the power of either herself or her grand-daughter to accept her invitation.

"And now I trust, grandmama, that we have satisfied this tiresome woman; and that she will not pester us any more."

Her grandmother shook her head; for she foresaw that, to a person of Mr. Read's temperament, the being refused would act as a spur to him to make further exertions; and when she looked on the beaming countenance of her beloved Catherine, she felt that any one might have sighed to possess such a jewel. But she was far too sensible to let any of this appear in her manner and voice, and restrained herself from shewing all she felt: though she said enough in praise of Catherine to make her blush still more.

“ And now, grandmama, I want to hear who Colonel Selwyn is: for the day you began to tell me, we were interrupted; so that I only heard he was the son of his father!” and she laughed as she saw the arch look with which Lady Anne answered, “ I think grandpapa would be jealous if he knew how much you admire this gallant Colonel.” But instead of following the thread of their discourse, I will conduct my reader by a shorter route to the same end.

Colonel Selwyn’s father has a fine old place in Huntingdonshire: an Elizabethan house, situated in a beautiful park of five or six hundred acres, which is well stocked with deer. Rather late in life he married a very pretty girl, and Colonel Selwyn was their only child. At the time we are speaking of, the elder Mr. Selwyn was old and infirm, and rarely left his “ ain fireside.” His wife was his constant companion. She was twenty years his junior; and though at times a transient wish came over her that she should like to visit her own dear Scotland, where her family lived, she carefully repressed such feelings. She saw

plainly that Mr. Selwyn could not exist without her constant and unceasing care, and therefore felt it was her first duty to remain with him. Many years had now elapsed since any relations or friends had enlivened their house with mirth and merriment: but yet, my fair readers, it must not be thought that Mrs. Selwyn was otherwise than happy. She had many resources in herself; the village school and the garden, were constant occupations to one who was never idle. But the person who engrossed the chief of her thoughts—who in fact might be said never to be absent from her mind day or night—was her son Arthur; whom we have already introduced to our readers as Colonel Selwyn, of the Guards. He was in her eyes quite perfect: she lived on the recollection of all he had done that was good and excellent. It is only fair to add, that the son thought his mother equally perfect; and never, when absent, allowed a day to pass without writing to her. She had long wished to see him well married: for, though she foresaw that this would remove her from the very first place in his affections, still she

looked forward to the pleasure of having a *loveable* daughter-in-law, and grandchildren, upon whom to lavish all the tenderness of her warm affections. Besides, Arthur was two-and-forty; so that she thought it high time that he should be settled.

The moment he mentioned Miss Selby in his letters as being so charming, she hoped that he had at last found some one to suit him; and his sudden departure with a party of young friends for the North the very next day, quite astonished her. She forebore to notice it as anything unusual, or even to allude in any way to Miss Selby: she hoped the match might be brought about in time, but was perfectly aware how often the best assorted matches are broken off by one careless word of even the well-wishers of either party.

Mrs. Selwyn was sitting quietly at work after dinner in an oriel window which looked upon the park: her husband quietly sleeping in an arm-chair at her side, when the little dog at her feet began barking furiously. She tried to quiet him, and succeeded so well that he again laid down his head at her feet. It was an evening, such as we often enjoy

in this favoured isle, when every thing invites to quiet and repose. The last rays of the setting sun were tinging the church tower, which stood on a knoll near the house, and threw its long shadow across the lawn. Some fine old chesnut and oak trees were near the church, and their tops were also glowing with its radiant light. The day had been oppressively hot, and the deer were now moving about as if the gentle cool breeze, which was beginning to wave through the trees, invited them to show a little more activity than they had done during the last twelve hours. The soft cry of the does calling their young, was the only sound that broke the stillness of the evening; and as Mrs. Selwyn gazed upon this fair and beautiful scene, she felt it was only through the sin of man that the whole world was not such a paradise as this that she now beheld. Her thoughts wandered through many scenes of bygone days and youthful pleasures, that had been shared with those now lost to her for ever: she thought of that fair sister, who, during the first twenty years of her life, had shared her every thought, her every joy and

sorrow ; and yet not a murmur escaped her, that one so fair had been taken away. No ! she felt that had it been in her power to recall her, she would not have done so.

It is undeniable, that there is something in a fine sunset which insensibly turns one's thoughts into a melancholy channel. Whether it is that the sun quickly disappearing reminds one more than anything else of the frailty of our nature ; or that, as poets of old imagined, in this solemn hour the air is peopled with departed spirits, I know not : but on the evening in question Mrs. Selwyn felt a most unusual depression of spirits. She passed out at the window, and even advanced a few steps on the lawn, hoping that the air would revive her. The moon was beginning to rise behind some fine aspens which quivered in her pale light. In the morning she had been reading that beautiful description of this very tree, where the reason of its tremulous motion is beautifully accounted for. Gently to herself she repeated the following words :—

“ The blessed cross, whereon the meek Redeemer bowed his head to death, was framed

of aspen wood ; and since that hour, through all its race, the pale tree hath sent down a thrilling consciousness—a secret awe : making *them* tremulous when not a breeze disturbs the airy thistle-down, or shakes the light lines of the fairy gossamer.” Pursuing the same train of thought, she repeated Mrs. Hemans’ beautiful lines on this very subject, consisting of a short dialogue between a father and his child :—

CHILD. (After a pause) “ Dost thou believe it, father ?”

FATHER. “ Nay, my child,
We walk in clearer light. But yet even now,
With something of lingering love, I read
The characters of that mysterious hour,
Stamped on the reverential soul of man
In visionary days, and thence thrown back
On the fair forms of nature. Many a sign
Of the great Sacrifice which wins us heaven,
The woodman and the mountaineer can trace
On rock, on herb, or flower. And be it so.
They do not wisely who with hurried hand
Would pluck the salutary fancies forth
From their strong soil within the peasant’s breast,
And scatter them, far, far, too fast away !
As worthless weeds. Oh, little do we know
Whom they have scathed—whom saved !”

She had now wandered through the garden to the churchyard, when her steps were arrested by the sight of a child, apparently not more than eight years old, tying a garland round one of those little wooden monuments which are so common in country churchyards. The child had already placed one garland round the further end, and was now busily engaged in arranging the other to correspond; and as she did this, Mrs. Selwyn, observing traces of tears on the child's pale face, gently approached her. On doing so she perceived that this was the sister to a little child who had been buried a week before, and she called her softly by name. The child started up, and on seeing *the lady*, as Mrs. Selwyn was called by the villagers, she dropped a curtsy: in answer to the lady's inquiries, the child said that every night since her sister's death she had placed two fresh garlands of the flowers her sister had loved best on the grave; that she had no fear of coming there alone, and that granny told her she need never fear, for that God always took care of those who were good.

Mrs. Selwyn gently commended the child, and, bidding her good night, proceeded to the house. Mr. Selwyn was still sleeping; so closing the window, she resumed her work.

In a few minutes she was startled by hearing the sound of wheels, and thinking only of her son she exclaimed, "Frederick! here is Arthur coming." At this beloved name the old man eagerly started up; never doubting, as the wheels rapidly approached the door, but that it must be their son; and the instant the bell rang they both hastened to the drawing-room door. They were astonished at hearing a strange voice in angry tones; so, begging Mr. Selwyn to remain quiet, his wife advanced through the hall to the house-door, in time to hear their faithful old servant say, "I don't know where my master is; and if I did, I should not tell the like of you, without asking my missis."

"What has happened, Smith?—Who is this?" inquired Mrs. Selwyn, suddenly appearing before the stranger's eyes: "is any one inquiring for Colonel Selwyn?"

"Yes, ma'am: but I think this young

man's mad; for he talks of shooting the colonel, the first time he sees him."

"Good Heavens! and who are you, sir?" said Mrs. Selwyn, turning with dignity to the stranger.

"My name is Read, madam; and I suppose you are the mother of this good-for-nothing colonel: be pleased to tell me where he is. He has thwarted me in a very ungentleman-like manner; and I will be revenged, or my name is not Read!"

"Mr. Read, you seem strangely to have forgotten yourself," replied Mrs. Selwyn: "as to my son, I do not know where he is at this present moment. But even if I did, I should not feel myself at all obliged to inform a perfect stranger; who, to judge by his words, can have no good intention towards him. The peace and quiet of our house ought not to be disturbed by such an unseasonable intrusion."

Mr. Read, like all bullies, was an arrant coward; and was most completely cowed by the firmness of tone and manner with which Mrs. Selwyn had addressed him; so, after muttering something about this stupid woman's

officiousness, he said, that as Colonel Selwyn was not there, he must return that night to town ; and ordered the post-boy to drive off.

Mrs. Selwyn managed to keep up her spirits, so as to recount the adventure to her husband, who treated the whole affair as a joke. But when alone, she could not but feel some presentiment of evil for her beloved son, and burst into tears. Sadly she thought of him ; then fervently commending him to the watchful care of Providence, she closed her eyes, and sunk into a tranquil slumber.

CHAPTER X.

WITH Mr. Read it was far otherwise. He was furious at having undertaken this fruitless journey; on what, after all, he was forced to acknowledge was merely a conjecture of his own. From his aunt alone he had understood that there existed a *penchant* in Colonel Selwyn's breast for Miss Selby; and now, on reflection, he saw how madly he had acted. Then came the disagreeable reflection of how the expenses of this little expedition—this wild-goose chase—were to be defrayed: he had borrowed a sum of money on promise of payment when married, at the end of the week, to a rich heiress; and positively asserted he should not return before the following week. Now he was driven back,—by what? By the firmness of a single woman. Maddened by this idea, he was almost tempted to return

to Bury House. Soon, however, he became incapable of making any more such sage reflections: he dined on the road; and, either from over-fatigue or feverish excitement (it matters not which), the wine had so great an effect upon him that he had no longer any command over himself. He continued so till his arrival in town the following day; when his valet, knowing how necessary it was to keep her nephew's return a secret from Lady Julia Read till he was in a proper state to present himself before her, conducted him to his room, and recommended him to remain quietly at home till he had recovered from the excitement.

But we will leave this infatuated young man, and see what has become of Colonel Selwyn. From the first moment of his introduction to Miss Selby, he had felt strange and, to him, unknown sensations: for he had never loved before. Still, not even to himself, would he allow that one dance at Almack's had settled his affections for life; and though, had there been no Mr. Read in the case, he might have been tempted to pay Catherine great attention, yet feeling no doubt in his

own mind that she was certainly engaged to him, he wisely thought he acted for the best in leaving London for a time, and not seeing this fair girl again till she was really married.

Many of my readers may suppose from this that he was not much in love with Catherine; whereas the fact was, he admired her so much, that he did not venture to trust himself in her society: and when, the day after he left town, he saw in the paper the marriage announced and the day fixed, he resolved to banish her from his thoughts. But thoughts are not so easily ruled; and it too often happens that Metastasio is right in saying,—

“Pastar di te non voglio, e fra le labbra
Ho sempre il nome tuo; vò dal pensiero
Cancellar quel sembiante e in oqui oggétto
Col pensier lo diping.”

Colonel Selwyn mechanically found himself, day after day, looking over the list of marriages to ascertain whether his fate was decided: but without success; till at length a faint hope arose that after all she might not become the bride of Mr. Read. He remembered what were Catherine's words concerning

him on the memorable evening of the ball in Willis's rooms, and he was almost inclined to be angry with himself for having ever suspected her of being capable of marrying such a creature: but then, again, he remembered the note he had received from Mr. Read, excusing himself from calling, because he was going to be married, and had not time to think of any one excepting Miss Selby. "Could any man," he said, "have the audacity to use such language of any gentlewoman, unless assured of her hand?" Still, the more he thought of her manner towards himself, the less he thought it likely she would ever consent to marry Mr. Read: "yet," he continued, "why should I, without more than one short half hour's acquaintance, pronounce her more high principled than the generality of the London young ladies?—I will return to town for the purpose of ascertaining this; for seeing is believing: I may indeed be doing her injustice. Her mother's daughter could never be so devoid of all right feeling, as to marry a man merely because people say he will have 20,000*l.* a year: which I much doubt." He ended his cogitations where they began, by thinking

Catherine must be perfect; and gave orders for his servant to prepare for an immediate return to London.

It is by no means an uncommon thing for men to suppose that girls will marry for money if they can; nor do we deny that such is sometimes the case: though it certainly seems unjust and uncharitable to suppose that every young girl who makes what the world calls a brilliant *parti*, is mercenary enough to do so merely to possess riches and consequence.

Colonel Selwyn became afraid that, if Miss Selby could ever be prevailed on to marry Mr. Read, he must give up all hopes of finding a woman whom he could love deeply enough to make her his wife. Great was his delight therefore at hearing at his club, in London, that Mr. Read had left town: it was confidently asserted, because he had been refused by a certain heiress,—that he was “*au désespoir*”—quite wretched,—that his uncle feared he was going melancholy mad: in short, that never had a young man been seen in such a sad state. Colonel Selwyn listened with great

attention while he heard this account from one of his friends who was lounging in the club ; and hope beat high in his breast at the thoughts of succeeding where another had failed. He was deliberating whether he would not go that very evening to Grosvenor-street, and had scarcely made up his mind, when the note was brought to him that Lady Anne had written the memorable evening of Mr. Read proposing to her niece. He instantly determined to go to Grosvenor-street and see how matters stood, for her ladyship had merely stated that some unpleasant occurrence had happened, and that she wished much to consult him, as being an old friend.

The whole day had been dull and rainy, and the streets were now covered with mud. The smoke hung so heavily over the town, that it seemed almost impossible to breathe ; not a breath of air was to be met with even in the park, and the rain began to fall in torrents as Colonel Selwyn turned his steps from the Junior United Service Club towards Grosvenor-street. However, with his military cloak, he cared but little whether it rained or

not: besides, his anxiety to reach Grosvenor-street prevented his thinking much about it. When he arrived there he became painfully anxious: he saw that the shutters were shut at No. 46, and the whole house appeared deserted. After ringing the bell, and waiting what seemed to him a long time (so great was his impatience), the door was opened by a servant-maid, who, in reply to his inquiries after Lady Anne Lyndsay—whether she was at home? where she had gone? when she returned? repeated in a hasty, hurried manner,—answered, “That she was sure she could not tell where her ladyship had gone, unless it was to see Mrs. Selby;—that Mrs. Stock, the housekeeper, had gone out, and she had no notion where her ladyship was gone;—that Miss Selby went away the day before, she believed, to Windsor.”

As Colonel Selwyn turned on his heel to return to his solitary dinner, he had plenty of time to ruminate over these disagreeable tidings; and felt firmly persuaded that Mr. Read must have been finally refused, or they would never have taken their departure from

town so abruptly. But why Miss Selby should go to Windsor, instead of returning with Lady Anne to her father and mother, he could not account for satisfactorily to himself. He racked his brain to recollect if there were any relations that he had ever heard Mrs. Selby mention as living at Windsor; but all without success: he could not remember one. By this time he had reached the club, having fully made up his mind to dine by himself; however, it being the height of the season, he fell in with numerous friends, and being a general favourite, was soon persuaded to join a large party. Politics, as usual, were discussed the greater portion of the time; and, as a matter of course, the part which her Majesty had taken in a certain transaction was likewise talked over.

Selwyn then heard that the Queen was gone to Windsor for a fortnight for change of air; and one of the gentlemen present mentioned, merely as a passing thing (not in the least aware that it could be a matter of consequence to any of the company present), that Miss Selby, the new maid of honour, had gone

with her Majesty. Colonel Selwyn started when he heard this name; but, commanding his voice, asked who this Miss Selby was. He received for answer from Mr. C——, that “she was a niece of Lord Newport’s, and of a certain age: older than the Queen: very plain, I understand,” continued his informer—“not that I have seen her myself, but this is what I hear.”

Colonel Selwyn could hardly forbear laughing to hear such a description of one who, in truth, was younger than her Majesty, and certainly anything but plain. “But what then,” he replied to his friend’s remarks, “could have been the inducement to have made her a maid of honour?”

This nobody could tell, excepting that the Queen had been intimate with many of her family; and her friends being all poor, it was a great point for her to get four hundred pounds a year. Nothing more passed on the subject; and dinner being over, Colonel Selwyn was left to his own reflections. It seemed so strange to him, that a young girl, who herself had told him a week before that

she knew no one, and had scarcely been out at all, should all of a sudden be placed in such an elevated position.

He now began to consider seriously that his chance of success was small: he felt sure that she was for ever taken out of his reach. He knew that people are very apt to change with a change of fortune. But the moment the idea entered his head, he strove to banish it, determined to wait the course of events; very unwilling to give up all hope, faint as it was, of ever gaining possession of the fair Catherine.

CHAPTER XI.

WE must now return to that morning on which Mr. Selwyn had been so disturbed by Mr. Read's sudden appearance.

The steaming urn had made its appearance in the dining-room, in 46, Grosvenor-street, and the party were assembled for their morning repast. Breakfast is often the most sociable and agreeable of meals, excepting in very grand houses, where the modern fashion of having servants bustling about the room completely destroys all ease and freedom. It is not every one who cares to proclaim aloud the chit-chat contained in a postscript, when the red-faced obsequious valet stands close to a chair, casting a sly glance over the letter: trying to discover, if possible, the signature, and to whom the story alludes; and with pretended officiousness, while handing some rolls,

as you turn over the last sheet, he sees the signature at the bottom, and so gets a clue to the whole conversation. Such was not the case, however, at Mr. Lyndsay's breakfast-table. His grand-daughter presided at the tea-table, arranged the toast so as to be within reach of both grandpapa and grandmama, and then, when every thing was prepared, and grandpapa was deeply engaged in his newspaper, ran gently upstairs to tell Lady Anne her morning repast was ready. She never neglected one single morning this task; and, though often weary and tired from the preceding night's dissipation, never for one moment thought of giving way to idleness, and allowing her grandmother to have the trouble of making breakfast: though the latter frequently urged her to do so, saying, that if she had not been present, of course that would have been her duty.

“That may be the case, granny; but then you are not so dissipated, and do not sit up till three o'clock seeing a wild girl dance about.”

The breakfast, however, that morning proved

rather a melancholy one; for directly Mr. Lyndsay had returned to town and heard how matters stood with Mr. Read, he decided it would be far better to leave London at once: that, as Catherine was going into waiting the next day, he and Lady Anne should also start at the same time and pay his daughter a visit.

They had hardly arranged this plan, when a command came from her Majesty, desiring them to attend her with Miss Selby. The Queen had returned to Windsor for the next fortnight at least; and that afternoon they were *en route* for the royal abode. Catherine was indeed astonished to find with what little regret she left London: she had been so annoyed both by Mr. Read's proposal and persecution of her, that although, with this exception, everything had gone off well, she felt it rather a relief to quit the gay metropolis. Again, she did not feel quite comfortable at the thought of going into waiting for the first time: she was nervous, and had a thousand inquiries to make with respect to what would be required of her. Yet it was the greatest possible comfort to think that she should have

Mr. Lyndsay and Lady Anne with her the first week: for her Majesty had, with her usual consideration for the feelings of others, commanded them to accompany their granddaughter on a visit to the castle. They were delighted at this mark of affection from their sovereign, whom they had known from a child.

The first evening little occurred worthy of notice; there were the usual number of grantees at dinner, and the usual quantity of stiffness and formality: although the Queen herself conversed with those who sat near her. Catherine was aware that it was not becoming in her to take an active part in conversation: indeed, she felt little inclination to converse. Lord Fleetwood sat next her, with his wife exactly opposite; and she never met this man without a sensation of pain, anger, and grief that almost suffocated her. But in the present large party she saw how necessary it was for her to hide such feelings; and if a slight tremor came over her as she answered his lordship, yet it was so trifling as to be scarcely perceptible. She got through

the dinner pretty well; when, on a sudden, immediately after the dessert had been placed upon the table, Lord Fleetwood turned to Catherine and said, in the most indifferent way possible,—

“Pray, Miss Selby, where is your sister? I have not heard of her for ages.”

The colour fled from Catherine’s cheeks as she heard these words; she had the greatest difficulty in suppressing all outward signs of emotion, but said in a low voice, which sounded more sad from its forced calmness,—
“I did not believe that even you could have insulted my sister’s memory, Lord Fleetwood. She was freed from all earthly care and trouble last year.”

It was now his turn to look agitated and annoyed: but the next minute he turned round to another gentleman, saying, with a light laugh, “Well, how did the mare go to-day?”

Catherine was deeply shocked at such heartlessness; but was spared further conversation with him by her Majesty rising from table. She had derived great pleasure from being in

company with the greatest hero of the day,—the immortal Wellington. From childhood, she had learned to venerate him as the saviour of her country : she dwelt with proud pleasure on the many glorious events of his past life, and was rejoiced to find that he met with that universal respect from all the company which was so justly his due.

As Catherine gazed on her youthful Sovereign, and beheld her animated and benign countenance, she felt grieved that one so amiable should have been subject to that abuse, which, even in those early days of her reign, some had not hesitated to lavish upon her Majesty.

The rapidity of thought is one of the most astonishing parts of our mental powers. In an instant of time thought has ranged to distant lands, to other shores ; it carries us back to our childhood ; we live again through many a scene of youthful enjoyment and of youthful pain ; the long-lost but once familiar face starts up before our mental vision with a vividness and a clearness that may perhaps give to frail man some faint conception of the

powers with which he was created, and may convey a faint idea of that superior,—that perfect bliss which awaits him hereafter.

Nothing occurred to disturb the equanimity of our Catherine's first evening in the presence of royalty, till, towards the close of it, she perceived Lord Fleetwood was quite close to her: and she never could hear those light merry tones without a pang—without such a feeling of dislike as scarcely enabled her to show common civility to his lordship. She longed to tell him how well his real character was known to her; how well she knew his powers of conversation, his want of principle and honour: and, though the idea of meeting him continually rather marred her pleasure at being in the household, yet, on the whole, when she retired to rest that night, she was very well satisfied that she should find her appointment quite as agreeable as she had anticipated.

The next morning, about twelve o'clock, she received a command to attend the queen, which she immediately obeyed, and found her Majesty playing with some of Lady ——'s

children, laughing and talking to them as happy as possible. But she was not long left in the enjoyment of this innocent amusement, for business had to be attended to, and audiences to be given. Catherine looked with astonishment, as she saw the queen rise from playing with the children, where she made herself quite on a par with them, and at once resume the dignity so befitting her station. It is not, however, the purport of this humble tale to describe all the every-day occupations of her Majesty, but merely to give the reader some faint idea of the amiableness of our youthful sovereign.

Catherine could not fail to be charmed with Windsor—the most magnificent palace of which Europe can boast. She was never tired of accompanying Lady Anne to see the pictures, the statues, and the *exquisite chapel*—the richness of the decorations, the waving banners, the light of day mellowed and softened by the stained glass windows; and during divine service, the rich melting tones of the organ much enchanted our heroine.

The tomb of the Princess Charlotte was

full of attraction to her. The early marriage and premature death of that Princess cannot fail to interest every one. The exquisite figure of the angel waiting to receive the soul when freed from its earthly tenement :—so heavenly in its expression ; the dim light from the amber windows—so disposed as to throw a glow round the bending form of the angel ; the palor of death, and the livid tinge depicted by the artist on the dying princess—show that this design was the noble conception of a mind of the highest stamp. If the tears of a whole nation could have reanimated that beauteous form, it would not now have been mouldering in the tomb ; for the awful and unlooked-for event—the death of one so young and of such high destiny—drew tears from all eyes. It was an All-wise, an inscrutable judgment, far above mortal ken. Religious and amiable as this Princess was, she was doubtless taken from “ much evil to come ;” and her memory will be revered as long as virtue shall command admiration.

After duly extolling the softened beauties of the chapel, admiration was again called

forth, of a sterner kind, by the round tower, the strong defences, the simple grandeur of the whole pile of building: but from these contemplations Miss Selby was frequently aroused to attend the royal cavalcade on horseback. The beauty of the forest, the venerable oaks arching far above their heads, excited her warmest admiration; the variety of scenery round the royal abode daily called forth new and reiterated applause from one so keenly alive to the beauties of nature. She fully appreciated the many advantages to be derived from her new appointment, and by her amiable cheerfulness won from all esteem and love.

After remaining at Windsor two nights, Mr. Lyndsay and Lady Anne took their leave, and Catherine felt very wretched at losing them; for this was the first time in her life that she had been left alone amongst strangers. However, she had already formed a friendship with the lady who was then in waiting with herself, and hoped to become better acquainted with her.

She had almost ceased to torment herself about Mr. Read, and had quite forgotten all

about Colonel Selwyn, when one day she received a letter from Mr. Read, again making a proposal to her—again urging his suit in the strongest terms, and concluded by saying, that if Miss Selby would not consent to marry him, she would have to answer for his life. This threat rather alarmed Catherine; though she laughed heartily at the beginning of the letter. She instantly enclosed it to her father, begging him to answer it—to say, that she still remained exactly of the same mind, and therefore must decline the honour of his hand; and to add, that if any more letters arrived they would be returned unopened. Most happy was it for her that she remained firm to her first determination. Had she possessed the least clue to suspect what the reader knows to be the case—could she but have imagined the wickedness of Mr. Read, she would not merely have ridiculed his attentions, but have loathed his very name.

She was sitting one day with her friend Miss —, when the conversation turned on what she had seen and done in London; and, mentioning Lady Julia Read's ball, her friend

exclaimed, "Why, are you that Miss Selby who everybody said was to marry Mr. Read's nephew, that horrid spendthrift? I never can believe that you liked him."

"Nor is there the least occasion that you should do so," replied Catherine, laughing. "I cannot tell you how the report got about; but all I know is, that, being cousin to Lady Julia Read, she asked Lady Anne Lyndsay to take me to her ball, and afterwards chaperoned me herself to Almack's; where I danced, naturally enough, the first dance with this detestable nephew. I then expressed my wish to return to Lady Julia, but she was nowhere to be found, and for the next three dances I was wretched: glued to Mr. Read. Not knowing a creature, there was no possibility of my escaping from him; and he pretended all the time to be seeking for Lady Julia. Though now I have not the smallest doubt but that it was all a preconcerted and pre-arranged plan between Lady Julia and her nephew, to make me appear in the eyes of the world as flirting with the latter: though Heaven knows, nothing was further from

my intention. Well," continued Catherine, "after the first three dances, I positively insisted on Mr. Read finding his aunt; and he did so; but before I could pour out any complaints to her, she introduced me to a Colonel Selwyn, a great friend of my mother's. Ah! she is an artful, clever woman: she saw immediately that I was terribly put out and annoyed, and so thought it would clear up the gathering storm if she introduced me to one whom I had seen as a child, though I had not the slightest recollection of him. But you must be weary of my long story."

"No, *point de tout*," replied her friend, gaily; "so pray go on, and let me hear what became of your loving swain."

Catherine therefore continued, and told her what Colonel Selwyn had said respecting the report in the paper as to her marriage, and about Mr. Read fancying her an heiress, of his proposing afterwards, and her refusal. She did not scruple to tell Miss —— the whole history, for she knew it had been much discussed in public, and therefore wished her to know the real state of the case; and she

could feel no compunction at making known Mr. Read's character since he had behaved so ill to her. She had not finished her account of him many minutes when Miss —— said, "Indeed! you have had an escape, Miss Selby, for I have heard from my mother that Mr. Read is a most profligate man—a complete roué. There was some awkward report, mama said she remembered hearing, a few years ago, about him and a Spanish lady: but I never was informed of the particulars—whether he ever did marry ——"

"Marry her! No, of course not. Why, here he is proposing to me!"

Without noticing this little interruption, Miss —— continued to say, that he was very much despised and disliked by other men; and that her brother always cautioned her against his charms: though such precautions were needless on his part, as she had never fancied him. "I think," she added, "we must be speaking of the same person. He has a slight cast in the eye—which does not, however, prevent his being good-looking—and is minus a finger on the left hand, as my brother used to say."

“Yes, yes, I have noticed both these defects,” cried Catherine. “But what a detestable wretch he must be! And this Spanish affair: it is all a mystery to me. One thing is certain, that were I his first, his only love, nothing should induce me to become his bride: he is very disagreeable to me. But I do not understand your hints about ——”

“My dear, we will not try to understand: it is much better we should not attempt it; for, from my brother’s manner, I suspect this roving swain of yours is an unprincipled, bad man—by no means a proper subject of conversation for two young creatures like ourselves;” and she smiled gaily at Catherine. The latter, however, was distressed that she should ever have attracted the attention of such a man, spoke vehemently against him, and, starting up from her seat, inquired if it was too late for the post? On being told it was so, she again sat down, resolving to write on the following day to her father.

Miss —— then said she could give such an instance of Mr. Read’s utter want of feeling and utter selfishness, as would put a climax to her

friend's disgust. "*The* nephew, *par excellence*," she continued, "as we will call him, had lost his father quite recently; his mother wrote broken-hearted letters, beseeching him to return to them. He preferred idling about London; and, though he received still more urgent letters, resisted every kindly good feeling, and allowed his father to expire without even going near him."

"How very dreadful! How terrible will be his remorse when awakened to a sense of his undutifulness! He is really too detestable! And to imagine that I should have ever gained the affections of such a man! And yet," she continued, in a lighter tone, and her countenance brightening as she spoke, "he sought me not for my own sake, but because he fancied I was a great heiress. A friend of mine overheard him say, on that memorable evening at Almack's, that at last he had caught an heiress! Horrid man! he was sadly deluded; for, as you well know, I do not, nor ever shall possess any fortune."

"But they say a charming woman is a

fortune, you know, in herself," said Miss —, in a gay, lively tone. After a little more light conversation and laughter, they separated for the night. Catherine felt deeply thankful that she had been preserved from much unknown wretchedness, if not guilt, by so decidedly refusing Mr. Read; the real state of the case never once occurred to her pure mind.

CHAPTER XII.

CATHERINE'S first act next morning was inditing a long letter to her father, giving an account of all Miss —— had said relating to Mr. Read. She confessed herself totally at a loss to conceive what he had done, but reiterated her friend's assurances that he was considered a very profligate good-for-nothing young man by her brother, a person of whom every one spoke well. She added, that there was some story about a Spanish lady; but she was acquainted with no particulars. Catherine wrote warmly, for she felt much annoyed at the whole affair; and the bare idea of one who was spoken of so lightly having attempted to gain her affections, excited her highest indignation. Her flushed cheek and flashing eye, as she penned this epistle,

showed how much it moved her. She concluded by entreating her father to prohibit all further intercourse between herself and Mr. Read, and after expressing her unconquerable aversion to him (even before hearing these dark inuendoes) closed and sealed her letter.

There is something soothing and calming in thus unburdening the mind of its various thoughts to one who is sure fully to appreciate all that is excellent in one's self, and to advise with gentle kindness what path should be next pursued. However indignant the feelings may be that are excited, still it is very disagreeable to see angry words committed to writing; so that, imperceptibly to one's self, the anger that has been concealed in one's own breast is softened and subdued.

Catherine felt that her character was so dissimilar, so unsuited to Mr. Read, that the hope of obtaining money must have been his sole aim—money, which there was but little probability she would ever possess.

Before seeing the effect produced upon Mr. Selby by the receipt of this letter, we must

give our readers a slight sketch of his history,—for hitherto he has remained in the background of our tale. They will remember that I mentioned he was young when he married Miss Lyndsay: having only completed his twenty-fourth year, and having just been presented by his uncle to the living of Torrington, vacant by the death of the late much respected Rector. It requires no small degree of moral courage in the younger sons of noblemen to enter the church; for, generally speaking, they have been brought up with much the same luxuries as the eldest sons—accustomed to have carriages, and horses, and dogs at their command: such had been the case with Arthur Selby. Till he was seventeen, no difference or distinction had ever been made between him and Lord B——, his eldest brother: they shared all their sports together, and never were two brothers more united. But the time was arrived for the younger one, who was destined neither to inherit a fine place nor an independent fortune, to turn his thoughts to some profession. It was left entirely to himself, whether it

should be the church, the navy, the army, or the law. His mother inclined to the first, for she had always wished to see her favourite son Arthur, a clergyman. His eldest brother wished him to go into the Guards, as then they would be more together than if Arthur was settled in some quiet out-of-the-way country place. This was too important a question to be decided at a moment's notice; so Arthur had a month given him to make up his mind. And he has frequently since been heard to say, that that was the greatest trial he had ever known. His own inclinations leaned towards the church, but then came the thoughts of leaving and being so much away from his beloved brother, from whom, as yet, he had never been separated even for a day: he had always shared his joys and his pleasures, and he was perfectly aware that, in the eyes of the world, there would be a great difference between Lord Newport's eldest son, residing in the finest place in ——shire, and the youngest in a small parsonage in a retired country living. It was a severe trial for one so young: but after the first fortnight, after having had a great deal

of conversation with both of his parents, the church was decided on. In vain did his eldest brother entreat and beg of him not to give a final answer till the end of the month.

For the first time in his life, Arthur felt he could not comply; and though Lord B—— was deeply grieved, yet he loved his brother too well to urge what he saw was disagreeable to him. So quickly were all the arrangements made, that by the end of the month it was settled that Arthur should immediately proceed to Mr. Bower's, in Kent, to read for college. The parting was most affectionate between the two brothers; and Arthur felt, when he said Adieu to his brother, that all his pleasure was gone. They agreed, however, to keep up a regular correspondence with each other.

Arthur proceeded on his journey to Kent. It was the first time he had ever seen that beautiful part of England; and gradually he became more cheerful, and was enabled to talk to his father, who accompanied him, with tolerable composure. The hops were in great beauty; and the rich festoons of flowers that

hung from pole to pole, excited the admiration of both our travellers. Had they been one week later, they would have missed this beautiful sight, for the blossom was quite ripe, and ready to be gathered: indeed, in some places, they had already begun; and the picturesque groups of children, and men and women with baskets and carts, added much liveliness and beauty to the whole scenery. Passing by Knowle, Arthur expressed a great wish to see it; for he knew it was reckoned one of the finest places in England: but the family being in great distress at the dangerous illness of one of its members, it was not shown, so he was obliged to content himself with looking at it from the road. When they reached Sevenoaks, Arthur began to get rather fidgetty, for he knew that Mr. Bower lived only a few miles from this place, and most heartily wished himself back again at his own home. His father entered, with great warmth, into all his feelings, and began describing to his son the place, and the people he would meet at Milton; and, as he looked at him, he felt proud at having such a son to produce before

strangers. Arthur was, indeed, remarkably handsome and unusually manly-looking, for his age. He was about six feet high; and though he had rather outgrown his strength, still there was something very striking about him. The high forehead, straight nose, full and dark hazel eyes,—shaded by the blackest eye-lashes,—a fine set of teeth, and quantities of black, curling hair, made the *tout ensemble* extremely pleasing; added to which, he had the most delightful expression: candour and openness were stamped on his brow; while his mouth, displaying great sweetness, tempered with firmness, made the most favourable impression upon all who saw him. His brother was particularly proud of his appearance: this was the more generous, as Arthur possessed all those exterior advantages which nature had denied to himself. But nothing gave him such pure, unmixed delight, as to hear the praises which Arthur's generous disposition, kindness of manner, and beauty of person, excited from all who approached him.

By the time Lord Newport had finished his

description of the persons with whom Arthur was to live for the next twelvemonths, they had begun ascending the hill, which leads to Milton: it was steep, and the country round beautifully wooded. The sun was shining brightly, and all looked the abode of peace and quiet: the surrounding landscape was spread out before them like a map. White-washed cottages were seen rising amongst the trees; and, at the distance of every two or three miles, appeared the grey church towers—the landmarks for succeeding ages—the only things which remained unchanged and unaltered. As Arthur gazed on this lovely view, backed by the noble woods of Knowle, he turned to his father, and gazing earnestly in his face, as if he would read his very soul, said, in a low voice, which trembled with emotion, while he devoutly pressed his father's hand, "My father; this is, indeed, a lovely scene. And God grant that I may learn to be grateful to Him, for placing me amongst such scenes as these; which must elevate and improve my thoughts. But, oh! my father," he continued, with deeper emotion, "how sad

it is to think, that it is man alone who makes this beautiful world a barren wilderness; by giving way to hatred, ill-will, and anger. If I can but live to be ordained, no efforts of mine shall be wanting to try and make people good and happy. Besides," he continued, in a gayer tone, "I shall have your and my mother's example, to guide me in the way which is right."

Lord Newport pressed his darling boy warmly to his heart, and could not bring himself to damp such bright hopes: though he felt he was getting old and infirm, and, in all probability, could not expect to live many years, to see his son realize his good intentions.

They had now reached the top of the hill, and called to the postboy to stop, that they might take a view of the village. It was rather a large place, with a long, irregular street. The houses were high, on a bank, and rough stone steps led from each into the road; they all seemed to be surrounded with gardens. At the further end, Arthur perceived, what he rightly conjectured was

the Rectory. It stood low, in a neat looking, old-fashioned garden, with neatly cut hedges; and the gabled ends peeped out, from among some fine, old, horse chesnut trees, which grew near the house on one side; while on the other some poplars and apple trees appeared. But what principally arrested their attention was the church, prettily situated on a rising ground, about a hundred yards from the Rectory. It was built in a cruciform shape, and in a much more ornamental style than is common in country villages. Some shining ivy was growing luxuriantly up part of the old tower, mingling its deep green leaves with the red foliage of the American woodbine; and, after encircling the tower, the ivy seemed to have attached itself to the porch, and hung in irregular festoons over the dark oak door.

The sun shone brightly on this fair scene; and for some moments both our travellers were lost in admiration. Lord Newport at length exclaimed, "Is it not wonderful that the English should be so blind to the beauties of their native land?—should go on spending millions abroad, and persist in saying there is

nothing worth looking at in their own country? They may search the whole Continent over, and they will not find one scene so calm, so beautiful as this."

The old nobleman spoke truly: for however much we must all admire the sunny vineyards of Italy, the snowy mountains and roaring waterfalls of Switzerland, the bright plains and rich soil of "la belle France;" still, all who have travelled abroad must acknowledge that, go where you will, such highly cultivated scenery, such an appearance of peace and plenty, is nowhere met with as in England.

Crack went the postillion's whip,—and away rattled the barouche up the high street of Milton, to the no small astonishment of the inhabitants, who came bustling out of their cottages to see the sight: smart equipages being in that village but rarely seen. A few minutes more, and Arthur and his father were at the door of the Rectory.

After the first awful introduction was over, Arthur began to feel more at his ease. Mr. Bower was apparently not more than thirty; of a gentlemanlike and pleasing appearance,

though seen under the disadvantage of spectacles ; for he was extremely near-sighted. He appeared to wish to make his newly-arrived pupil comfortable ; and talked kindly to Arthur, who soon began to feel quite at his ease. Mrs. Bower now entered : she was a little, bustling woman ; not vulgar by any means ; and looked the picture of good-humour.

After having duly pressed her visitors to take some luncheon, which, however, they begged to decline, she invited Arthur to go with her into the garden, and really appeared quite smitten with his openness and good-humour. She was, in fact, a most excellent creature ; and had it not been for an unfortunate propensity to fuss about trifles, would have been perfect. This, however, did not prevent her being most agreeable and chatty ; and Arthur laughed and talked with her with the freedom and cheerfulness of an old acquaintance.

In the meantime Lord Newport had been talking to Mr. Bower, saying how very anxious he was that his son should, honourably to himself, pass an examination at College ; though, for his own part, he felt these

examinations were made a great deal too strict and severe. He should have thought, that if instead of being crammed with Greek and Latin, the young students had been taught their duty as clergymen, it would have been much better. Still, as the system of the day was "*cramming*," he begged Mr. Bower would advance his son as much as possible.

The latter assured his lordship that no effort on his part should be wanting, during the following year, to prepare his pupil for entering upon his college life. Soon afterwards, Lord Newport took a most affectionate leave of his son, and returned home, satisfied with the choice he had made of his son's tutor.

Arthur felt sad and lonely after his father's departure. He and his brother had been brought up entirely at home, and this was the first time he had ever found himself quite alone amongst strangers. It matters little whether one is seven or seventeen, the first time of leaving all connected with "*home*" is perhaps one of the bitterest trials we ever meet with: the utter sense of desolation and loneliness that seems to overpower every feeling when

the last sound of the retreating wheels is heard, is perhaps as acute as any after separation can possibly be. Arthur felt strongly tempted to indulge in a flood of tears; but he struggled manfully against his emotion, and was able, though with rather a choked voice, to thank Mrs. Bower for showing him to his own "sanctum." When left quite alone, his grief burst forth; and with words mingled with tears, he knelt down and prayed that he might be allowed to see his beloved parents and his brother once more.

Scarcely had he risen from his knees when he heard a soft knock at the door, which was opened by a pretty child, who said, if Mr. Selby liked to come down, the dinner was ready. He instantly descended with his little companion; not a little pleased to find that there was something young about the house: for he was passionately fond of children. Who can look on the sweet, innocent face of a very young child without loving it, and secretly wishing that we could all retain that simplicity and innocency which is the chief charm of early childhood? Alas! how

soon blighted are these fair blossoms! Before they reached the drawing-room door, Arthur had made great friends with little Agnes, and she felt all fear of him vanish.

CHAPTER XIII.

ARTHUR was not of that class who formed their estimation of others according to their outward appearance. Many days had not elapsed before he fully appreciated Mr. and Mrs. Bower's kindness: their characters were indeed irreproachable; to which they added that politeness and urbanity of feeling towards their young pupil, which effectually won his open and confiding heart. It was the first time of their having such an addition to their household; and it was purely from motives of gratitude to Lord Newport's family that Mr. Bower undertook this most arduous of all tasks, the education of his son. He was in every respect well fitted for it; being pre-eminent as a classical scholar, well versed in modern literature, and having a natural flow of good spirits, which made him at all times

a cheerful companion. As Arthur became better acquainted with him, he discovered the vast extent of good Mr. Bower did amongst his poor people; there was scarcely a peasant in the village who had not experienced strong proofs of his goodness to them: but so quietly and unostentatiously did he perform all his acts of charity and kindness, that it might be truly said, his right hand knew not what his left was doing.

The morning after Arthur's arrival, his tutor thought it better to begin at once with their studies; and Arthur was too deeply impressed with the necessity of exertion to wish for any delay: besides, if employed, his thoughts would not wander so continually to his home, and yearn so much after his brother. The regular routine soon ceased to be irksome to him, and he delighted Mr. Bower with his steady application. The evenings were spent in drawing and singing; in both of which delightful arts Mr. Bower was a great proficient. This was a great advantage to Arthur, as it gave him a polished and refined taste, and greatly enhanced his enjoy-

ment of the beautiful scenery round Milton. The days quickly slipped away: there was nothing to mark them, all being equally well employed; and the monster *ennui*, the bane, and not unfrequently the ruin of so many, was unheard of.

Sunday was indeed a day of rest to the whole family; at an early hour they were all assembled at church, which was well filled by a highly respectable congregation. The village children sang, to a sweetly toned organ, their hymns of praise. After this duty was over, the Rectory party returned home to their cold dinner; it being the rule of the house, that no hot meat should be served up on Sundays, that the servants might not be prevented from attending divine service. When the ordinary business of the Sabbath was concluded, they generally walked out; and Mr. Bower took occasion to detail to his pupil what the duties of a conscientious clergyman are. Though this topic frequently formed the subject of their conversation, it was one which never wearied Arthur; and he frequently said to Mr. Bower, that if he

could but resemble him, he should be satisfied. His kind tutor smiled, and replied, that there was a much higher standard of perfection, to which he must strive to attain; but hoped, that all his life, he would remember that there was no one who had a higher regard for, or wished him more happiness, than himself.

“Excepting your wife,” said Mrs. Bower, smiling; “and, as women’s feelings are always stronger than those of men, so I feel more attached than you can possibly do, to our *beau garçon*,” as she playfully called Arthur.

She was one of those bright, happy people, who create sunshine wherever they move: self was always entirely forgotten; and her only thought was to make others cheerful and happy. It is, indeed, astonishing how much one really sweet-tempered, pleasing woman can do, towards making society agreeable, and keeping people in good humour one with another. There are few people who can withstand the bright smile of one whose chief object is to make others as happy and contented as herself. It was not only amongst her equals

that Mrs. Bower was such a favourite,—she was equally beloved by all the poor: to all and each she was invariably kind, promoting the comfort of the aged, and encouraging the amusements of the younger part of the community. She often declared, that to her eyes there could not be a more melancholy sight than to behold crowds of neglected-looking children idling about the streets, hearing profane words. She had, therefore, prevailed on her husband to purchase a small field near their house, which they gave up to the village youngsters as a playground; and the happiness that this one little field bestowed on hundreds of children is not to be told.

Evening prayers concluded the peaceful day at Milton Rectory; and as Arthur knelt down near the darling little girl, he felt deeply how much he should have to answer for, if, after enjoying such unusual advantages, he did not exert himself to the utmost to follow the example and advice of his excellent preceptor.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE summer quickly passed away, and the leaves falling from the trees, began to tell of winter's approach. The swallows had taken their departure for a more genial climate, and the wild fowl were beginning to appear on the banks of the river. Arthur looked forward to the winter with feelings of the keenest enjoyment; skating and shooting he had always been very fond of, and Mr. Bower did not object to his following either of these amusements, in those hours which did not interfere with his studies.

There ran near the house a deep, but sluggish stream, which gradually froze over, and on which, ever since the severe frost set in, Arthur had been in the constant habit of skating,—never dreaming of danger. One morning, to the joy of the farmers, the frost

was seen to be disappearing: it was with very different feelings that Arthur saw the snow melting away, and he was heartily glad when, released from his studies, he was able to go once more to the river and skate.

Mr. Bower had been called away from home, but his wife cautioned her young friend to be very careful, and try the ice before he ventured on it: though they neither of them thought there could be any danger. When Arthur reached the river it looked to him exactly as it had done every day for the preceding week; so, without a moment's hesitation, he fastened on his skates and prepared to glide over the smooth surface. He had not advanced many yards when he found the ice very rotten, and beginning to crack: fully alive to the imminent danger of his situation, it flashed across him, that unless he could, by one vigorous effort, retrace his course, he must inevitably be lost; he used the most strenuous efforts to return to the bank from whence he had started, but all his exertions were vain: the ice was giving way in all directions, and in he went. He felt the water

sucking him under the ice. Giving one loud shout for help, in case any one should be within hearing, he tried to spring to the bank, which was not more than four feet from him; but his skates prevented him obtaining a firm hold on the slippery bank, and he fell back into the water. All hopes of saving his life fled, and he strove to collect his thoughts, and to turn them to that world to which he believed himself fast hastening. Not many moments were allowed him for these solemn thoughts; a lump of ice which had become detached from the main piece, floated against his head, and striking him on the temple, produced insensibility. How long he remained in this state is uncertain; but Mrs. Bower, finding he did not return at the usual hour, became alarmed, and sent out servants to seek for him. On reaching the edge of the river, they saw what they imagined to be the corpse of poor Arthur Selby: he was lying with one arm stretched powerless by his side; the other clinging, with a death-like grasp, to a branch of willow. Without a moment's hesitation, Mr. Bower's faithful old servant

flew to his side, and, at the peril of his life, succeeded, with the gardener's help, in extricating poor Arthur from his perilous situation. He gave no signs of life; and though the butler perceived that he still breathed, he shook the tears from his old eyes as he looked on the dying form of this fine young man. By making great exertions, and straining every nerve, he contrived, with the gardener's assistance, to carry poor Arthur home,—despatched a boy for the medical man, and hastened to Mrs. Bower, who was anxiously expecting their return, to tell her of the melancholy state in which they had found her poor young friend. Her cheeks became of a death-like hue, and her trembling limbs almost refused to do their office, when she heard from the faithful old man that he feared all their care would be fruitless.

Hardly waiting to hear the end, and summoning up all her courage, Mrs. Bower rushed to Arthur's room, and reached it at the same moment as did the gardener with his precious burden. No words escaped her lips, but her death-like calmness spoke even more plainly

than words, that to her there appeared but little hope:—that life was nearly extinct. Determined to let no means be spared of restoring animation, she instantly proceeded to remove his clothes, saturated with water; rubbed his chest and arms with hot flannel, breathed into his mouth, and chafed his cold hand in hers. Fortunately the doctor was at home, and soon made his appearance. He shook his head despondingly when he saw how deadly pale Arthur was, and heard how many hours had elapsed since he quitted the house. Still while there is life there is hope; and desiring Mrs. Bower to despatch a messenger instantly for her husband, he proceeded to follow up the same methods of recovery which she had applied, though with more vigour. For above an hour the poor patient gave no signs of returning life; but then, to the inexpressible delight of the good doctor, he opened his eyes for a moment: the lids soon closed over them again, as if too heavy to remain unclosed. But this sign of returning animation, slight as it was, gave the good doctor new hopes: and he again applied

all the remedies with such great skill and with such good effect, that Arthur, giving a long-drawn sigh, opened his eyes. He seemed to wish to speak, but could not articulate a word. His eyes appeared glassy and dull, and Mr. Jones did not feel at all sure that it was returning consciousness: for sometimes a few minutes before the sleep of death comes on slight symptoms of animation appear. Then again when he considered his fine unbroken constitution he indulged in brighter hopes.

At this moment Mr. Bower entered; and if ever deep anguish and sorrow were plainly engraven on man's countenance they were on his. A few hours before, he had left Arthur in the full enjoyment of health and spirits; now he returned to find him to all appearance a corpse. Without giving utterance to his deep feelings, he descended the stairs to beg his wife to write a note to Lady Newport immediately, and went to procure a messenger to go there express. He felt certain his parents would not lose an instant in flying to their son when aware of his danger. He then

returned with his wife to the sick chamber. There was no alteration; and through the whole night they watched Arthur as if he had been their own son: they could not perceive the slightest shade of improvement. But he still breathed. Towards morning, however, a slight change was perceptible in his countenance, and Mr. Bower, who was watching him most earnestly, fancied he smiled. Hope again returned, that he might be spared: but the smile passed away, and all became as was before. It is a beautiful Irish superstition that when people smile in their sleep, angels are whispering to them. The kind nurses remained breathlessly still.

At seven o'clock the doctor arrived and said the fever was abating, and desired the patient might have a little nourishment if he could possibly swallow it. Mrs. Bower's kind hand prepared it for him, and prevailed on him to take it. It seemed to revive him; a slight shudder passed over him, after which, sighing deeply, he opened his eyes. They did not now close as they had done the night before; they were fixed on Mrs. Bower, and seemed to inquire

why she was there. She guessing his thoughts, tenderly and gently told him he had been very ill, must be kept quiet, and that she would nurse him. He smiled again, and seemed to understand her; she smoothed his pillow, and, taking hold of his hand, sat down to watch over him; and as Mr. Bower saw her affection and kindness he felt what an inestimable treasure he had found in such a wife. It was some time before Arthur again moved, and then he murmured in a low voice, "Where is my mother? she always nursed me when I was ill before, and why am I not in my own room?" It was evident his mind was beginning to wander, and it required all Mrs. Bower's firmness to hear him ask why his mother did not come to see him instead of sending a nurse.

There is nothing more distressing—nothing more sad than to see a person in a state of delirium: it makes the very blood run cold, when the sufferers look at their dearest friends, and do not know them, and ask, in that hurried manner which generally accompanies the malady, for one who is perhaps at that instant

soothing their bed of sickness and pain, by every possible care and attention.

Towards the middle of the day, Mr. Bower began to listen most anxiously for Lord Newport's arrival. He had left word in the village, to beg them to leave the carriage there, and walk up to the Rectory ; for he thought very possibly the noise of the carriage might disturb his poor patient. He was looking out of the window, when he perceived his expected guests hurrying towards the house ; and, making a sign to his wife, he left the room, with a noiseless step ; for he knew that the life of his adopted son depended entirely on his being kept perfectly quiet, and free from all excitement. He therefore begged Lord Newport not to see him that day ; but to suffer Lady Newport and Mrs. Bower to nurse him.

“ Perfect quiet and repose is the only chance he has of recovery,” said Mr. Bower ; “ and as he is delirious already, he will not know you, and the sight of a third person may excite him, and make him feverish.”

The truth of this was evident to all parties ;

so leaving Lord Newport and his son to themselves for a short time, Lady Newport hastened up-stairs, with Mr. Bower.

It was, indeed, a melancholy trial to this good, fond mother, to see her dearly-loved child stretched on the bed of sickness—to hear him call upon her name, perfectly unconscious of her presence—and to see his pale cheek and sunken eye. She saw, with one glance, how judicious and kind all Mr. Bower's arrangements had been, and how necessary it was that he should be kept perfectly quiet; and her heart ached to think of what would be the feelings of his poor father, if he could see his son—the joy of his heart, the pride of his life—in such a state as he was now in. But she had, before this, witnessed such extraordinary instances of recovery from the most dreadful cases of illness, that she could not but feel some degree of hope; for Arthur had been always strong and healthy: besides, he had the vigour of youth on his side. Devoutly imploring the Divine Giver of all good to raise him from his bed of sickness, she proceeded to take her place by his side,

and insisted on Mrs. Bower taking some rest. This she would not consent to do, till Lady Newport positively insisted on her doing so; assuring her, that if there was the slightest alteration, she should be instantly acquainted with it. She left this fond mother to watch by her son; and, after reporting to the gentlemen below the state of their patient, she went to repose herself for some hours, desiring that she might be awakened at the end of that time. She did not hesitate to take a little rest, and to leave the sick room; for she felt that, very probably, for many months she might be required to act the part of a nurse. She well knew that it was necessary to husband all her strength; for nothing undermines the health, and wears the spirits of those who are unaccustomed to nursing, as sitting-up at night. Besides, the leaving him with his mother was very different from leaving him to the care of servants. Still, though she required rest so much, her anticipations of his death were so strong and painful, that she lay, turning from side to side, quite unable to close her eyes, till,

perfectly exhausted, she sunk into a broken, unrefreshing sleep, for a few hours. Being then, by her own orders, awakened, she hastened to Arthur's room, and perceived, from Lady Newport's look, that there must be some slight change for the better. She stopped near the door, and heard him say, in a low, weak voice, "Mother, I think I see you near me. What, are you here?" And then her gentle tones assured her son of her being close to him, and of her remaining with him till he was quite recovered. The smile which then came over his face was his own bright sunny smile; and his mother felt how hard it would be to part with him, whose very smile seemed too bright for this world. And yet she was conscious that she might be called upon to do so; as her own dear mother had the same bright and beautiful countenance, and she had been taken from her many years. Arthur did not attempt to speak for some little time, and then asked for Tiny, as he called Mrs. Bower's lovely little child. She gently told him her little child was sent into the village.

The doctor now again made his appearance, and seemed quite amazed at the improvement his patient had made during the last six hours. He begged Lady Newport would use her influence with her husband to prevent his seeing his son for the next day. Mr. Jones was a kind, good man; one of the many who, much to their honour and credit, give up many hours every day to attend the poor gratis. The good he effected in the village was untold: by whatever malady the poor were attacked, if they chose to ask for his assistance, it was freely given; and never had he been known to require payment for medicine or attendance from any labouring person. Fortunately for them, his circumstances were such as to enable him to make this sacrifice.

Yes! the medical profession is one of the few in which the most skilful frequently devote their time and money to benefit the poor. A really sensible and skilful practitioner is an invaluable resident in a country village; and none was ever more deservedly respected, valued, and looked up to than Mr. Jones. He was a quiet, gentlemanlike person, and, as

Lady Newport witnessed with what assiduity he attended her son, she felt satisfied that neither herself nor her husband could ever be sufficiently grateful to him ; if, by his means, through the blessing of God, her son was restored to health. Promising to call again that afternoon, Mr. Jones took his leave.

CHAPTER XV.

FOR two weeks Arthur remained in such a state that it was very doubtful whether he would rally or not; then such decided symptoms of improvement were observable, that the whole family began to entertain sanguine hopes of his recovery; and after the lapse of another fortnight, he was so much better that he was able to be carried down stairs. His parents still remained with him; and instead of being wearied with such a long illness, if possible, Mr. and Mrs. Bower's kindness increased. Although Arthur got every day more impatient to be allowed to resume his old habits, still nothing could exceed the sweetness of temper with which he bore all the restraints imposed on him; and to this, in a great measure, his medical attendant attributed his recovery.

At the end of two months from the time the accident occurred, he was able to be moved by slow stages home. Mr. and Mrs. Bower accompanied him; for he could not bear to be separated from these kind friends; so they yielded to the urgent entreaties of his parents, and agreed to spend some time with them, till Arthur, in fact, was able to resume his studies. March and April had passed away before he was allowed to think of doing so; but towards the end of another month it was settled that Arthur might return with his kind friends to Milton. He still suffered from weakness, and his cheeks were less blooming than before his accident; yet when his parents recollected what he had gone through, they could not but rejoice at his present improvement, and trust that he might continue to gain strength.

After residing at Milton another year, he was declared by his tutor sufficiently prepared for the University, and accordingly proceeded to Oxford, where he had been entered. He never forgot the impression this first visit to that magnificent city made on him: a city which stands unrivalled in the number of its

beautiful buildings. The view, as you enter on the London side, is quite perfect. Four spires and towers greet the stranger's eye, and as he proceeds along High-street, passing University and Queen's and All Souls' Colleges, the churches of St. Mary's and All Saints, it is impossible for him not to concur in the generally received opinion, that there are very few streets in the world that can be compared to it: the diversity of building, the variety in the styles of architecture, with the fine trees of Magdalen College throwing a deep shade over the lower part of the street, give it a vastly different appearance from most of our towns.

Lord Newport had been a fellow of All Souls, and lionized his son over the fine building and the magnificent library with great delight. The hall and library he fully appreciated: the length (one hundred feet) astonished him. As Lord Newport did not remain many days in Oxford, they passed all their time in seeing the public libraries and different colleges; and the old man was quite as much pleased as his son at renewing his

acquaintance with all these beautiful buildings. But it is not our intention to give a detailed account of Mr. Selby's life as an Oxonian; it will suffice to say that he was generally esteemed, and passed both his examinations with flying colours. He corresponded with his former tutor, who continually gave him the very best advice—advice which he studiously endeavoured to follow. What had greatly enhanced the pleasure of his college life, was that his brother had been at the same time residing at the University; so that a day seldom passed without their meeting.

We must now pass over a few years; and then we shall find Mr. Selby in holy orders, acting as curate to Mr. Bower; who, although he did not necessarily require his assistance, yet was happy to give him some employment, and superintend the commencement of his clerical duties. He allowed him to reside in his house as a nominal curate; that he might, before entering upon the multifarious occupations of a village priest, learn some of the duties that would be required of him. Arthur was very fond of Milton and the

whole of Kent, and frequently declared that if he had his choice, he would rather live there than in any county in England.

Two years had elapsed since his ordination, and he was spending a few months in London with his father and mother, when circumstances occurred which effected a complete change in his future plans. He was one day engaged in reading aloud to his mother, when Lady Anne Lyndsay and her daughter were announced. He fancied they were merely common-place acquaintances; not remembering the name. He was quickly undeceived by his mother jumping up and receiving them with open arms, and with the greatest cordiality, and then introducing him as her youngest son. The two mothers were soon engaged in conversation; and Arthur, feeling himself bound to play the agreeable, endeavoured to amuse the young lady: but he soon discovered that the longer the conversation lasted, the more he was charmed with her manner. He had never, he thought, seen any one so fascinating, so lovely, as she then appeared to him. Her dress was so simple, and elegant—

white muslin, trimmed with green ribbon, and a large leghorn hat, with a long feather. Her beautiful curls had escaped from under the hat, and were seen floating down quite to her shoulder. Miss Selby being thin, and very tall, the large hat and long feather were most becoming.

Arthur gazed on her large, mild blue eyes till he felt almost afraid of being thought rude : but not the smallest tinge of pride or displeasure could he trace in that countenance, which looked the abode of peace and happiness.

After rather a lengthened visit, Lady Anne and her daughter took their leave. Arthur attended them to the door, and eagerly accepted Lady Anne's offer of a seat in her box at the opera that night. He had still all his boyish, youthful spirits ; and as his mother gazed upon his bright and joyous face, she felt that a queen might have been proud of such a son. She doated upon him,—so did all his family. Little Arthur was the pet of the whole house, from his birth to the present time. The youngest of a family must always be a darling ; even maiden ladies, who are too much

taken up with their lap dogs and parrots to regard aught besides, seldom see their youngest nephew or niece without some feeling of pride and love.

CHAPTER XVI.

ARTHUR was particularly free from all *gaucherie* and *mauvaise honte*; there was a gentleman-like ease and freedom about him, exceedingly attractive to all: especially to the fair sex, by whom the respectfulness of his manner was fully prized. He was to join Lady Anne Lyndsay at half past eight, and eagerly awaited the arrival of the time. He was as cheerful as usual at dinner; and he and his brother afforded Lord and Lady Newport great amusement by relating some of their Oxford adventures. Still, though this was very agreeable, Arthur could not help fancying that dinner lasted double the usual time, and that the old butler grew dilatory; and once or twice he appeared so impatient, that his brother rallied him about it, and laughingly asked "if he expected to meet any

bella donna that evening?" Arthur coloured, saying, with a gay smile, "that he was going to the opera; and as his acquaintance with it was much less than that of his brother, he felt great anxiety to get there and hear Catalani again." "Particularly," added his brother, with a smile, "in company with such agreeable people." He laughed; and they then talked about indifferent subjects, till at length—joyful sound!—the footman's voice was heard to say, "The carriage waits, Mr. Selby."

"Well then, good-night, my dear sir, for I shall not see you again to-night."

"I hope you will have a great deal of enjoyment," replied his father; and rapidly saying "Good-night" to his mother and brother, he leaped into the carriage, and soon found himself at the opera. He had no difficulty in finding Lady Anne Lyndsay's box; and on reaching the door, he heard the tones of a man's voice, and the notes of Miss Lyndsay's reply.

A transient feeling of jealousy and anger shot through Arthur's breast; for he had felt so sure of being the only gentleman of the

party, that he was rather startled to find one already there. Quickly, however, he conquered this feeling; for a moment's reflection reminded him that he was the merest acquaintance of both mother and daughter. All these thoughts crossed his brain as he entered the door; but then, indeed, his look was bright and joyous; for as Miss Lyndsay bent eagerly forward to catch the full tones of the song, her face was shaded with her dark, rich curls, which fell over a neck of such whiteness as to rival the snow-white muslin which enveloped her form. The only ornament was some lilies of the valley twisted in her hair. Such was her appearance and attitude as Arthur entered—so free from all affectation, so natural, so graceful, that Arthur felt tempted to wish that she might always remain thus. The noise of his entrance, however, made her turn round, and she received Mr. Selby with a sweet smile; and, shaking hands with him, gently said, "You are late."

The words were few and simple, but they thrilled through Arthur's breast, and his

heart beat quicker as he mentioned his father's family arrangements having prevented him coming sooner. The ceremony of introducing him to the only other gentleman in the box, was then gone through; and as this was done, a favourable impression was made on the minds of both young men. As Arthur gazed on the tall, slight form opposite to him, scarcely yet in its full vigour; and remarked the black hair, and large, soft blue eyes; he thought that this stranger was indeed the most striking in his appearance of any man he had ever met with. He was of too generous and open-hearted a disposition to feel one moment's pang of jealousy; even when, after a little longer acquaintance, he fancied that Miss Lyndsay accepted the attentions of the latter with manifest pleasure, unmixed with the slightest tinge of flirtation or coquetry: they appeared to Arthur like two old friends, well known to each other. Lady Anne watched with interest what effect their manner would have on her new beau; for she had seen, with a mother's quick eye, the impression her daughter's charms had made on the young man fresh

from Kent; and quite unused, she suspected, to the being thrown in the way of such fascinating charms. But let not my readers think from this that Lady Anne Lyndsay was a match-making mother,—far otherwise: though where is the mother that would not rejoice to see her daughter well married?—not well married, in the general acceptation of the phrase, but married to one whose life would be devoted to making his wife happy. But, alas! this evening, bright and enjoyable as it was to all the party, must come to an end; and as they moved from the box, Arthur gave his arm to Lady Anne Lyndsay, her daughter following with —— cannot my readers guess who this was?—perhaps in time they will discover.

It was long that night before Arthur closed his eyes; visions of beauty, youth, and love, floated before him—visions of that face and form, which had quite bewitched him the preceding evening. And after several other meetings, this first impression ripened into steady and unaffected love; doubly heightened by perceiving that it was fully returned by the object of his affections. At the

end of two months, they were married, and quietly *en route* to that parsonage which was now to be the home of this petted London beauty. Here they lived with much happiness until the time our story commences: though, having a family, they were not exempt from cares and trials. But there was a religious cheerfulness, an utter absence of all selfishness in both, which prompted them to promote the amusement of their young people in every way; and the same hands which were seen in the evening playing waltzes and quadrilles to her children, and joining in all their sports, might next morning be seen administering relief and food to the poorest mendicant in the parish. The same with Mr. Selby: yet so quietly, so unobtrusively were all his good deeds performed, that it was only to his own family they were known; and not always to them. He was indeed one of those characters which, to the glory of our church, are so frequently met with: one who followed his Master's precepts, by going about doing good: one who was imbued with the deepest humility:

one who delighted in making others happy :
one who had no tincture of that uncharitable
moroseness which considers people who differ
from them as little better than heathens : one,
in short, who did to others as he would they
should do to him.

CHAPTER XVII.

MY readers will remember that we left Catherine closing her letter to her father. She still felt uncomfortable about Mr. Read: she feared how dreadful his conduct had been; and, with the sensitiveness of a refined nature, shrunk from any further intercourse with one who she was now given to understand was utterly worthless. But our heroine was not of a nature to see things long in their blackest colours; and remembering that she had still a fortnight to be in waiting, she roused herself, and taking up a volume of Shakespere, was soon deeply interested. It was fortunate for her that she was so fond of reading; for though angry thoughts constantly intruded themselves upon her, still the mere effort of forcing the mind to dwell on some object unconnected with self, had a very beneficial

result. Thus eleven—twelve o'clock came ; and she began to be anxious about her destination for that day, when Miss —— came running in, and said an order had that moment been given to herself, to attend the Queen on her drive ; so that Miss Selby might amuse herself as she pleased.

“ But why do you look so grave, *ma petite* ? ” said this lively young lady. “ Why, at eighteen, I hardly knew what it was to look grave.”

Catherine felt rather ashamed of being found still thinking of Mr. Read ; but did not attempt to deny that she felt very nervous as to what would happen next : he being so thoroughly unprincipled.

Miss —— instantly stopped her merry laugh, for she felt truly for her ; and being some ten years older, and suspecting more than she had cared to tell her friend, she was even more apprehensive of the evils resulting from such base conduct than Catherine herself. But she cheered her with the idea that since her father knew that Mr. Read's conduct was open to censure—or, at least, to suspicion—he would,

in all probability, settle the affair without her hearing any more about it. "And now let us banish Mr. Read from our conversation; for he is like the *Diable Boiteux*, we used to hear of in the nursery, who, by his ugly visage, frightened mirth away."

After a pleasant half hour of gossip, Miss —— withdrew, to equip for her drive; and Miss Selby was left alone to amuse herself with her books.

What, my readers will ask, has become of Colonel Selwyn all this time? Where is the hero who, at one time, seemed so desperately smitten with our fair Catherine? Where is he? With his parents, relieving the monotony of his mother's life, at Bury House, and paying every attention to his old father. His amazement was great when he heard of the way in which Mr. Read had disturbed and interrupted his mother, on the memorable day of his visit there. From his mother he did not conceal a thought that related to Miss Selby; and to his father he imparted his feelings when he was willing to listen to him: but at threescore years and ten, one is not quite so

eager about these things as at twenty years younger. His mother encouraged his attachment for Miss Selby, by every argument in her power ; but concluded that, as Catherine's waiting could not be over till the end of the month, he had better remain with them till then. Over and over again did he dwell on all the charms of Miss Selby's conversation, and smiled at his own enthusiasm. But eagerly as both mother and son wished that this alliance could be brought about, they neither of them attempted to deny that there might be difficulties in the way. First and foremost stood Mr. Read. He was the man, of all others, whom Colonel Selwyn most despised. He had behaved in an unprincipled manner to Miss Selby ; and this was the circumstance which first drew Colonel Selwyn's attention to her. Had he but known all that our readers are already acquainted with, he would have indeed contemned him. He longed to see Catherine again—

“ Her image filled his soul.”

Waking or sleeping, it was her sweet tone that rang in his ears. He tried to interest

himself as much in the farming establishment as he formerly did; but his mind was too restless, too unsettled, to derive great pleasure from all these home pursuits. Yet, day by day, he visited the school; the poor people he had known from his cradle; and as he heard blessings implored on his parents' heads by the lips of both young and old, he did indeed feel quite recompensed for the little sacrifice of his own feelings he had made in visiting them. Everything was conducted under the eye of a bailiff, who, having been brought up by Mr. Selwyn, was nearly as much beloved as his master; for, in everything, he both sought to benefit and improve the condition of their poor neighbours. In this respect, Bury was indeed a famed spot; and proudly may the author boast that in England alone such villages are frequently to be met with. Colonel Selwyn was likewise delighted to take a part in these arrangements. Still, in all his ruminations, he could not but feel very uneasy as to what conduct Mr. Read might next pursue. From his previous knowledge of his character, and from that which was generally given him,

he felt convinced, that if Mr. Read really did admire Miss Selby herself, and (which was more probable) was in love with the fortune he supposed she was to inherit, there were no means that he would not scruple to have recourse to, in order to obtain this prize. The idea of such a scheme succeeding, maddened Colonel Selwyn. He had seen, in so many instances, women who had been over persuaded to marry men whom they had professed to dislike and despise, that he half trembled for Catherine's firmness; seeing she had to contend against Mr. Read and his still more unprincipled aunt: who, he felt certain, was the prime mover of this match, and had been the first instigator of it. When he reflected on the way in which Miss Selby's name had been brought before the public, by all those shameful advertisements in the papers; so publicly, that he thought there was nothing could have been more revolting to a delicate-minded woman — when he thought on these things, and on all that had passed between himself and Miss Selby, on the only night they had ever met,—hope again rose in his breast, that he

might still possess this charming girl, and thus shield her for ever from Mr. Read's persecutions.

In general, men know little or nothing of the character of women: but Colonel Selwyn had studied the character of those that he had been intimate with; and, from all he there saw, he was convinced how unjust the world is, in accusing the female sex of levity and inconstancy—how untrue, in saying, that nine women out of ten marry for riches or rank. He had a higher opinion of the fair sex; and, though he never attempted to deny that this may be the case in many instances, still, from all he saw, he felt morally certain that for the most part that frivolous manner assumed by so many women, hides some deep, some devoted attachment: perhaps to one who is, alas! utterly unworthy of them;—one who, having striven by every means in his power, and succeeded in gaining the affections of a woman, deserts her, and leaves her neglected and miserable; then again mixing in the world, soon finds an opportunity of playing the same game with another in-

nocent victim : forgetting that there is one, who, if she chose to speak out, could ruin his character in the eyes of all right-minded and honourable men. But this is not in woman's nature : she endures much, but complains not.

CHAPTER XVIII.

So much have we been taken up with our Catherine's affairs, that no time has been as yet found to revert to that gala day, to which her sisters were so eagerly looking forward, when last we were with them. Susan had gone, as was previously arranged, to Newstead Lodge, the preceding evening; for the Stanleys wished her to be there, to assist in making the arrangements. The first question that was asked by many young voices at the Rectory, on the morning of the 29th of May, was, whether the sun shone? and the answer, in the affirmative, gave general satisfaction. The chattering, as the little children got up, was quite incessant as to what they were to expect; for as yet they had not been told anything on the subject, in order that the surprise might be the more delightful.

"But only fancy," said the youngest,—a

lovely urchin of six years old ; “ we are not to go till twelve o’clock, and that is such a long time to wait—such a very long time,” he repeated, in a doleful tone. But the little pet of the whole house was soon reconciled to this delay by hearing that if he had gone earlier he would have to return at seven, instead of remaining till nine. Oh, the first days of pleasure, how gay and sunny they are!—the merest trifle pleases ; everything is seen on the bright side. Happy little man ! he knew not what sorrow or vexation was ; his life had been one continual sunbeam, without one cloud to ruffle its serenity. He was the *youngest* of a large family. Oh ! how much is expressed in that one word “ *youngest* ;” it recalls days when every bright and lovely flower, every smile, every thought was directed to the making some little pet child the happiest of the happy, and merriest of the merry. Alas ! that such blissful days should ever be clouded with storms and tempests ! Not but that to childhood, the sorrow caused by, and the tears shed over, some dead canary, or broken toy, are as bitter as those that are shed in later years over some lost friend or companion : but in the first case, in a few seconds afterwards,

the child will have forgotten its little griefs—will be smiling again; whereas, in the latter, deep wounds, like the loss of those we have fondly loved, are never forgotten, though mercifully softened by time and hope. The going to Newstead Lodge was, indeed, a great event to our little friends, and they could talk and think of nothing else.

At nine o'clock they were all summoned to prayers; and when they saw their father and mother, they were too much engrossed by their own feelings to think of this: for let the poets say what they please, man is, at all ages, a selfish being.

It was Catherine's letter which had made Mr. and Mrs. Selby look grave: that their darling, high-minded child should have been exposed to so much annoyance from a man so worthless and undeserving in every way—as from Miss ——'s hints they felt sure Mr. Read must be—chafed their minds not a little. They felt exceedingly beholden to Miss ——, who, by her timely announcement of some inimicable objection, had strengthened Catherine's resolution of having nothing to say to Mr. Read. But there was no great difficulty in deciding what was to be done, now matters

had been thus partially explained; so Mr. Selby instantly wrote a cold, formal note to Mr. Read, mentioning that he had heard of various circumstances of his past life, which made him insist that, for the future, Mr. Read would never hold any intercourse with his daughter, as she could only regard with the greatest abhorrence a character such as his had been described to her. Mr. Selby said he alluded to some disgraceful history connected with a Spanish girl: he knew no particulars, nor did he wish to know any: that his daughter had always professed her indifference towards Mr. Read; who, if any attempt were made again to renew their intercourse, must take the consequences. The note was quite gentlemanlike, but very decided. It was this disagreeable affair which had damped the cheerfulness of Mr. and Mrs. Selby. But theirs were affectionate hearts, who always tried to forget, in the presence of their children, everything but the delight of having such sweet pledges of their love; and as Tiny leaped into his mother's arms, and hid his little face upon her shoulder, they both smiled cheerfully; while mama whispered to her darling little triad that they must be ready by twelve. The

sight of their happiness diffused itself into their mother's breast, though Catherine's image constantly returned to mar her feelings of joy.

Susan had gone to Newstead the preceding evening, and her mother rejoiced that she had done so. She was merely aware that her sister had been very much annoyed by the attentions of a disagreeable man, but knew nothing of his real character: neither did her parents; for Catherine having from the very first, expressed her dislike of him, her parents had never made any inquiries respecting this person. If Susan, who was most keenly alive to everything that related to her sister's happiness, had had the smallest idea how much Catherine had been vexed and worried, Mrs. Selby felt certain she would not have gone to this fête: now there was no necessity for her knowing a syllable of any particulars till her return home. All the neighbourhood were expected to be present at this party; and, as in Wiltshire, owing to the large tracts of downs which belong to most estates, neighbours live many miles apart, some people came from a considerable distance. Those who did so were amply repaid for the exertion. But we must not forestall our description of this charming

day's amusement; and one chapter at least must be devoted to the description of all the company, on that day assembled in one of the prettiest spots on the banks of the Avon.

CHAPTER XIX.

WE have in a former chapter informed our readers that Newstead Lodge was situated on the banks of the Avon; which was here very wide, and, like all streams in a chalky soil, as clear as crystal. The garden, which had been lately laid out with great taste by Mr. Stanley, sloped down to the water, and the lawn was as smooth as velvet, while groups of fine old trees, on each side, added much to the beauty of the scene. At the time that the party from the Rectory arrived, they found Susan and the Stanleys arranging the targets and bows and arrows: in another half hour, the lawn presented a very gay and animated scene; about twenty young people, of both sexes, were engaged shooting; and though it is true more arrows were seen in the grass than in the bull's-eye, this did not prevent great enjoyment and merriment among the

archers. Four youths, brothers, between the ages of twelve and sixteen, displayed great skill; so expertly did they shoot, that they easily beat the other marksmen off the field: who alleged, in their defence, that they were not accustomed to shoot at so great a distance. Maria Stanley herself was the best lady shot; and the tight green bodice, with full white muslin skirt, were most becoming to her pretty figure. She was too sallow to be really pretty, but as the white and lilac feathers that adorned her bonnet waved amongst her bright curls, she certainly had a very *distingué* and pleasing appearance. There were, of course, the usual number of short, ugly men—each of whom probably flattered himself that he could not be of the number; and the ordinary quantity of badly dressed girls that are seen in every large party in the country: but even the most fastidious critic must have allowed that with the various groups scattered over the pleasure grounds, the *tout ensemble* was a gay and pretty scene. The grand secret for making any party of this sort go off well, is for all to make up their minds to enjoy everything, and to be pleased and contented. Nothing is more infectious than finding fault.

The prizes had not been distributed when Mr. Stanley came forward to proclaim that dinner was ready; so that the archery party were to finish their game afterwards. To this movement, no one objected, as the heat was very great; and, after a little respite, they could resume their shooting with renewed zest and vigour.

To a person unacquainted with the arrangements of the place, it seemed quite extraordinary that such a large assembly of people could be accommodated with dinner at once. However, Mr. Stanley, giving his arm to Mrs. Selby, escorted her towards the house, as she thought; instead of which, after going a few hundred yards, they turned short round into a pretty, secluded, shady walk, the boughs of the shrubs on either side meeting over their heads. After pursuing this path a short distance, Mr. Stanley, with eager curiosity, said, he was really anxious to inquire if the report of the marriage of his favourite Catherine was true; for several people had asked him if it was so: but as it had not been announced by her family, he had always denied it.

“You have then, indeed, acted the part of a real friend, my dear Mr. Stanley,” replied

Mrs. Selby ; “and, for the future, pray contradict it on my authority. I assure you, there is not a word of truth in it ; and we are all exceedingly annoyed at it.”

“This is most vexatious, indeed,” he replied : “but people will talk ; and if any idle gossip observes a girl merely speaking to a young man, she immediately puts it down as “a settled thing ;” and spreads the report in the neighbourhood of both parties, through servants, or some equally creditable way ; so that even had there been anything in it, such detestable interference effectually puts a stop to the flirtation.

“Yes,” replied Mrs. Selby ; “it is but too true that many girls, and indeed, many men, have their peace of mind destroyed in this manner. But,” she continued, in a gayer tone, “Cupid’s darts have not yet pierced the heart of our darling. She has never had the slightest liking for Mr. Read ; nor, indeed, has she herself seen him a dozen times : for the fortnight after she left us, she went into waiting.”

This fortunately changed the subject ; for good old Mr. Stanley wished to hear all that had passed while she was at court, and all

those little details,—those trifles that make up the sum of human life in the palace. Mrs. Selby and her friend had now reached the end of this little shaded pathway, and here she was most agreeably surprised with what she both saw and heard; for the moment Mr. Stanley made his appearance, a band of instruments struck up some of our lively national airs. The band was seen picturesquely placed under some fine old elm trees, the last group in the park before you reached the flower garden. There was one little musician who attracted all the attention. He was apparently not more than twelve years of age, and was playing, with all his heart and soul, on the violin; the rapidity with which his fingers moved was quite wonderful. Mrs. Selby said, that the year before she had heard Sivori, but she thought this child far surpassed him. She had ample time to observe the musicians as they passed to where they were standing. She soon discovered the top of a white tent in the distance amongst the trees; and her look of surprise and pleasure was quite equal to that of the youngest of the party, for she had not been led to expect anything of the sort. The tent was large, and placed

on the brow of a small hill amongst fine trees, looking down towards the river ; and on the other side were seen the deer—some drinking, and others tossing their proud antlers in the air, unaccustomed as they were to have their repose disturbed by strains of music. Groups of happy people were seen on every side traversing the hill, and the brilliancy of the *coup d'œil*, animated with cheerful and joyous looks all present. One little group particularly attracted Mrs. Selby's attention ; it consisted of several children trying to climb the steepest side of the hill ; their little hands were loaded with flowers of honeysuckle, primroses and cowslips, and all the other beautiful flowers which adorn the English wood in Spring. But soon her attention was riveted to one who seemed the youngest of the party, and whose clear, merry laugh, was heard above the others. His companions were trying to help him up the hill, but he continually rolled back again, much to the amusement of the others, whose merry peals of laughter were heard on all sides. When nearly at the top, our friend Tiny, for he it was, sat down, declaring, that he “mut est his weay limbs,” leaving out all the r's, and lisping in the prettiest way possible.

But Mrs. Selby could no longer detain Mr. Stanley; so, waving her handkerchief to the little party, she passed on. As they approached the tent, all the company paired off, and followed their host into the tent. Over the door was written, in roses, Mrs. Stanley's name, and the doorway was literally formed by a canopy of roses. Mrs. Selby was quite astonished when she entered the tent, to see how spacious it was. All round the sides were ranged tables and benches, and across each end, so that the whole party, upwards of an hundred and fifty, were accommodated at once. Flowers and evergreens were entwined round the pillars that supported the canvass roof, bunches of flowers were placed on the table, and several lovely bouquets were scattered about for the fair guests. Nothing that could in any way conduce to the amusement of the party had been neglected; all those little attentions which are so gratifying were thought of. After all had been amply regaled; after the toasts for the Stanley family, the Queen, Prince Albert and the Royal Family, had been duly honoured, the whole party adjourned, some to the house and some to the park. The walking part of the scheme was

most agreeable to all the younger and most active part of the community, who felt it would be a welcome relief, after having been detained so long in the heated tent, to refresh themselves by a stroll through the lovely grounds; for, though they were not large, they had been laid out with so much taste, that in walking round them one could scarcely believe that they were not of much greater extent.

Wiltshire is noted for fine beech-trees; the chalky soil and fresh clear air suit them, and some of the largest were to be seen at Newstead Lodge. They might, indeed, have unfolded many a tale, if they had had the gift of speech: and there are few people who have not often been tempted to wish that trees and old walls could tell the scenes they had witnessed in days of yore. The Miss Stanleys sang beautifully; so their young friends begged them, as they were sitting under the trees, to indulge them with one of their lively airs. After much solicitation and apparent reluctance, they began. Maria had a singularly deep and full voice, and having had the advantage of the best masters, and possessing great natural taste, she sang exquisitely some

wild Spanish guerilla songs, her sisters joining in chorus. Nobody could have appeared to strangers in a more amiable light the whole day than did Maria: she had been exerting herself to the utmost to please everybody, and had taken great pains to insure the success of every arrangement. Why, then, did Susan regard her with such different feelings from what she did her sister? Why did Susan look incredulous when Maria repeated some witty, merry story, which only raised in the breasts of others a feeling of mirth? Yet though Susan was, to use a common expression among young ladies, "nearly dying of laughter;" she could not help feeling that in all probability the tale was not true, but only invented on the spur of the moment to amuse and entertain her auditors. There was one person, however, who did not think Maria Stanley could be anything short of perfection—who was delighted with all she said, and watched her every look and movement. Suddenly, after finishing one of her songs, she turned her bright eyes upon him, saying, "Ah, ha! Monsieur le Capitaine, perhaps even you could fire a shot if sin g some fair dame?" Monsieur le Capitaine only laughed, the usual re-

source of people when they have nothing to say. So his fair tormentor continued, "Really it was too unkind of you not to try your skill at archery this morning. I did not expect that one who professes such *universal* politeness would have been rude enough to refuse a fair suitor in that kind of way. If I had known you were among the group, ought I not in revenge to have sang, what shall it be? 'Take your hated presence away?' And having uttered these words, rose from the bench where she had been sitting, and feigning to look very much displeased, moved towards the garden. The rest of the party followed, with peals of laughter, highly amused at this comic scene. When they reached the house, Mrs. Stanley was beginning to express some anxiety for the return of the young people; lest they should be exposed to damps and fogs, and all the host of horrors that careful mothers fear for their precious children. Too many frequently turn a deaf ear to these kind admonitions. How differently did Susan Selby meet her mother! She always reserved her sweetest smile for her: she felt that there was none on earth like her, and her only fear was lest her mother

should be over fatigued, or exert herself too much. Mrs. Selby was not strong; and though Susan did not know what Catherine's last letter contained, she knew that her mother, and indeed both her parents, were very anxious to learn how Catherine would feel her way, surrounded as she was with strangers, and without mother to advise her. One thing they particularly enforced upon Susan, and that was never to reveal family affairs; and then the thought of Lord Fleetwood flashed across her mind: and as she remembered how often she had seen him dancing in that very room, and with whom — she shuddered: but making a violent effort, she recovered herself; the colour returned to her cheek, and she was, to all appearance, the same sprightly, happy creature she had been before.

CHAPTER XX.

ALL the furniture had been removed from the drawing-room, and the band, which had been playing in the park during the morning, was stationed in the recess of the bay window. As Susan and her mother entered the room, the merry airs of the Irish quadrilles met their ears, and in one moment Susan was carried away to dance: for she was so popular that she never failed to meet with a partner,—proving the truth of that common remark, that beauty is not the only attraction in a ball-room, but that there is a certain “*je ne sais quoi*” which carries the day. Mrs. Stanley had collected the whole neighbourhood; and it may, perhaps, amuse our readers to have the several parties described. It is, of course, more *comme il faut* to commence with those of highest rank: so we must introduce our readers to Lord Flarrant, one of those popular noblemen who

unite the highest refinement of manners to the greatest civility and cordiality to his country neighbours. He was but a very young man when his father died, and immediately determined to reside principally on his large estate in Wiltshire. At twenty-eight, he married a lady worthy of him in every respect: she was one who, though born in the highest station, had been brought up to value things by their intrinsic worth; and did not regard the pomp and splendour of rank with such admiration as those whose lives being cast in a humbler sphere are wont to do. They had now been married five years, and as yet no family had blest their union. They seemed to require nothing but this to render their happiness complete; and though this blessing was denied them, they bore their disappointment without a murmur. Lady Flarrant had given up dancing ever since she married; but it was not difficult to distinguish her from among the other "wall flowers." Her husband was such a general favourite that he danced incessantly the whole evening; and he it was who opened the ball with Susan Selby. Possessed of immense riches, his chief aim was to do good. No charity, either public or private, in the

whole county but received great support from him : he was everything that a country gentleman ought to be ; and well would it be for Old England if more of her nobility devoted themselves to improving and ameliorating the condition of their poorer neighbours.

As a complete contrast to these exemplary people, we must now describe Sir Hector and Lady Jones, and their two daughters. He had been originally in the army, but retired at the close of the war. Although he had left the mess-room, the sort of language he there heard was what he preferred to hear at his own table : anything but refined, and most unsuited to ladies' ears : for in his days the soldier's life was a far more riotous one than it is at present. Lady Jones was the daughter of a retired clothier, who, if she had not attempted to play fine, might have passed off *assez bien* ; but as it was, her efforts to appear of consequence, and her felicity at being called " my lady," which was too evident to be disguised, made her, to say the least, extremely ridiculous. The daughters were in every respect worthy of such parents, excepting that their mother had the advantage of possessing the remains of great beauty ; and if she had left

alone those artificial aids—such as rouge, wigs, flowers, and trinkets—she would have been a very fine-looking woman ; whereas now she appeared excessively vulgar : but to return to the daughters ;—they were both tall, and their complexions most delicate ; but then, to counterbalance this, their heads were covered with a kind of carrotty-red wool, not more resembling hair than did the white “*ton*” of the Albinos that were exhibited some time ago. Certainly, it was their misfortune not to be handsome ; but as Susan watched them, she could not resist laughing most heartily. All the other ladies had retained their morning dresses, and merely thrown aside their bonnets. But the Misses Jones, anxious, as they expressed it, to “cut a dash,” had taken the trouble to perform a most elaborate toilette, and the result was most wonderful. Their red curls were frizzed out to the utmost ; and above these curls, wreath upon wreath was seen of flowers of all colours raising their heads : those that were “born to blush unseen” being very prominent. But it is always a great advantage at a party, to have some worthy folks who are good-natured enough to be sufficiently absurd as to make themselves the

laughing-stock of the rest of the company. Quadrille and waltz succeeded each other in rapid succession: everybody seemed pleased and happy. There was a very fair proportion of lady-like, pleasing-looking girls; but no striking beauties. The *chaperones* were beginning to feel tired; papas were seen looking at their watches; and all the signs of a *finale* were visible, when the musicians—the indefatigable musicians—struck up a merry country dance. In an instant, a general rush was made towards the heads of the respective houses, to petition for half an hour's law, and it was readily granted; for their hearts could not but remember that it was the dance of their youth, and they liked to see their children enjoy it. Susan was again seized by Lord Flarrant, to her great delight; for he was quite her beau-ideal of a partner. This country dance seemed interminable: couple after couple tore up and down the room, till at last the fiddlers, quite exhausted, cried for mercy. A general groan of despair was heard round the room; for it happened, as it frequently does in a long country dance, that some unfortunate, modest couple, who had begun at the bottom of all things, had not

succeeded in working their way to the top when the music ceased. In half an hour, this merry dance being over, the house was cleared; all the family of Stanley retired to bed, fatigued and exhausted. But there was one who could not sleep. We before mentioned that there was a Captain Renolds who paid Maria Stanley great attention; during the whole day he had been her constant companion, and the earliest opportunity that occurred, had made her an offer. He declared his attachment, and how deeply he loved her; and she had done—what? After flirting with him most desperately, she ended by refusing him—refusing him so positively that it was impossible for him to speak to her again. But now, when quietly seated in her own room, she thought over all that had taken place; she felt half vexed that she had refused him; she acknowledged to herself that she certainly liked him very much; and had only rejected his pressing suit, because—oh! shame to the fair sex that such young ladies exist!—because she fancied that a certain rich baronet, who had always been very attentive to her, was about to propose to her; because, though in her heart she despised him,

and had a great contempt for his character, she thought that it sounded better to be my Lady Laurence, than plain Mrs. Renolds. All this flashed across her mind ; and there is, no doubt, to an ill-conditioned mind, a secret kind of pleasure in refusing an offer, and of mortifying a man's pride. Again, she reflected that she might now possibly remain Miss Stanley ; but immediately banishing this idea, she retired to rest with the determination of making Sir Godfrey Laurence pop the question before she was a month older. She would then have, she said, at her command, a large establishment, carriages, and horses ; and what could a girl wish for more ?

Very many marriages are, it is to be feared, patched up in this way. But let us not suppose that such is always the case : and yet few, comparatively, are the result of deep and heartfelt attachment.

CHAPTER XXI.

IT was not till the following morning that Susan Selby heard all the particulars of Catherine's letter. Her angry and indignant feelings against Mr. Read could be scarcely restrained sufficiently to allow her to listen in silence to all her father said as to the necessity of inviolable secrecy with regard to the whole affair. But she had a quick perception of right and wrong, with no lack of good sense, and soon perceived that if one word of this vexatious affair got about, it would deeply grieve and injure her sister ; she, therefore, promised to be as discreet and prudent as her mother ; and to prevent anything more transpiring, Mr. Selby locked up the letter, and instantly repaired to London to demand an interview with Mr. Read. The day of his departure was a "triste" one for the whole house, and especially for the mother of our fair heroine. She

tried to remain calm and tranquil, but Susan saw by her pallid cheek and the slight tremor in her upper lip, how great was the struggle within. What she and Mrs. Selby chiefly rested their hopes upon, was the letting Mr. Read know that they were acquainted with his infamous character ; and then, if all feeling of shame was not quite extinguished in his breast, he would be too happy to hide himself in that obscurity which was best suited to him.

It was late before Mr. Selby arrived in Manchester Square, and on inquiring for Mr. Read, was told that he had gone that morning to Windsor. Without a moment's delay, Mr. Selby proceeded thither, and going immediately to the palace, demanded an interview with Miss Selby. It was so late that his daughter had just finished dressing for dinner when the message was brought to her ; and fearing that something dreadful had happened, she rushed to Miss ——'s room, and begging her to request the Queen to dispense with her attendance at dinner, said she would await her Majesty in the drawing-room. Miss —— fancied something more had occurred with Mr. Read, and promising Miss

Selby to make the best excuse for her that she could, left her, as the page at that moment announced it was time for them to descend.

After the delay of these few minutes, Miss Selby sent word to her father she was at liberty to receive him. Oh! what joy to her to be again clasped in those arms that had so often shielded her in childhood from imaginary troubles and dangers, and which, she felt sure, would now protect her from all serious difficulties. Her father's first question was, whether she had seen Mr. Read since her last letter, and it relieved his mind not a little when he heard she had not; but she added that he had been sending her notes and letters every day, all which she put into her father's hands. Catherine then repeated all that Miss —— had told her, and ended by declaring that whether her statement was correct or not, she thoroughly detested and despised him, for he had most completely marred her happiness for the last few weeks.

“But would it not be possible for you, my dear father, to make inquiries about this young Mr. Read yourself, into the truth of all that Miss —— mentions? Could you not inquire of his uncle or aunt?”

“Certainly,” he said, “this is what I shall do. You, my dear girl, have behaved beautifully: but here is a long letter from your sister Susan, that will divert your attention a little from your own distresses; for I have kept my post-chaise, and must be off to town again directly. Mr. Read’s letters, not being dated, give me no clue to find him out; but no exertions, you may be assured, my dear child, shall be wanting on my part to discover and silence your persecutor.” So saying, he took leave of her.

After having delighted herself with reading all her home letters, she finished her evening toilette, and hastened to the saloon.

CHAPTER XXII.

MR. SELBY felt relieved by his visit to his daughter. He ascertained that from the very first she had never given Mr. Read the slightest encouragement, so that not the smallest blame could attach to her; and when he thought of the openness and beauty of her mind, he felt that there were very few men, of his knowledge, worthy to possess such a jewel. That night nothing more could be done; it was very late when he reached London, and having travelled the whole day, with his mind sadly harassed, he needed repose. Sleep—soft, balmy sleep—asserted her empire over him, and resigning himself to her sway, he was soon as sound asleep, in the midst of the noise and bustle of a night in the height of the London season, as if he had been in his own quiet home.

— Perhaps of all the disagreeables that attend

a residence in town, none is greater than that of having your rest disturbed, night after night, by the incessant rolling of carriages, carts, and all the indescribable vehicles which crowd our densely-peopled metropolis. Children in London are quietly told that they will soon get accustomed to the uproar, and so they do, in time; but to those who are more advanced in years, it is more difficult to get over the excitement which such a continual bustle all round you must to a certain degree keep up.

The sun, next morning, had risen high in the heavens, and in the far distant country would have looked bright and clear; but to Mr. Selby's eyes, as he arose, it was seen through such a mist of smoke that it appeared hardly to have commenced his daily course. Market carts were hurrying backwards and forwards; all the thoroughfares seemed alive and swarming with human beings. It has been well said that of all the countless myriads who are daily passing and repassing each other, there is not one who has not some occupation: it may be pleasure, or it may be business. On many a countenance you may discern gain and loss legibly stamped on

its surface: so true it is that money, which is the greatest evil or the greatest blessing, is so unequally divided amongst men, that while one-half of the inhabitants of the town are revelling in every kind of luxury and indulgence, the other half have hardly the bare necessities of life.

These reflections crossed the mind of our excellent friend as he paced from his hotel to Manchester Street, that he might renew his inquiries after Mr. Read. The same wretched pair that we before introduced to our readers were now sitting in a drawing-room, so sumptuously furnished that it seemed as if wealth and luxury had exhausted their boundless resources to contribute to the enjoyment and refinement of its inmates; who were the only things in the whole room that were not refined. These two accountable beings had less of elegance and real refinement than the chairs and tables round them; for the latter were subservient to the will of their maker: they were useful in their vocation, while this man and woman were acting in every respect directly contrary to the expressed will of their beneficent Creator. Their wealth and their talents they lavished

on themselves, utterly regardless of the calls of charity. And where, oh, where in the wide world, are there more numerous and deserving objects of charity to be met with than in the metropolis? Granted that it is a difficult thing for ladies in a certain situation in life to visit and relieve the poor and destitute at their own houses: yet there have been some such bright exceptions in our highest circles; and it is deeply to be lamented that more is not done where distress is so prevalent. If it be urged that it is out of the question, or not *comme il faut*, for ladies themselves to visit their poorer neighbours in town (for in the country no such reason can be urged), they may easily find others who would gladly distribute their charities, however trifling, among their poor parishioners. If those who enter into the dissipation of London would remember that a very trifling sum, deducted from all their amusements and finery, would go very far to relieve the frightful want which is too frequently to be met with at no great distance from their own doors, they would give it. No well-regulated mind can be hurt by mixing in the gay world; it is only natural that young people should like to meet and congregate together, as their

fathers did before them : and to the honour of the female character be it spoken, that hundreds, nay thousands of those who to all appearance are immersed in a vortex of gaiety, are seen, at the end of the season, carrying consolation and comfort into all the cottages round their homes. Yes, in the country the poor enjoy many advantages quite unknown to their distressed fellow-creatures in large cities. It is difficult to say how their condition is to be improved, but something should be done. The rich, for whose will and pleasure the vast metropolis has so increased of late years, ought to bethink themselves of some way of bettering the condition of the poor, who perhaps reside within a hundred yards of their own palaces, in the extreme of poverty and misery. We are told that "the poor shall never cease from the land," that is,—do all you can, still there will be poor : but, oh ! let each and all of us labour to lighten their load of care and sorrow ; let each of us strive to save some little trifle for the use of those (oh, sad and painful thought !) who too frequently see their loved children waste away through want, and sink into the grave before their eyes, from the impossibility of procuring medical advice.

Much, much is undoubtedly done by many, but much more might be done by all. And here it should be remarked that one principal reason why the grandees and those of highest fashion have so little, comparatively speaking, to spare for charity, is on account of their expensive establishments. They give their upper servants higher wages than what forms the income of many a hard-working clergyman of respectable family, who is expected to make a decent appearance in the world. As a proof of this, I will just mention what occurred to a noble friend of the Author's whilst engaging a butler. He mentioned that he gave seventy guineas a year. The man looked rather dissatisfied, observing that he had always received eighty.

"Eighty!" said Lord P——, "why, I give Mr. Gladstone, who officiates at my chapel, no more."

"Very likely, my lord; I always pity those poor gentlemen." This was said in the coolest and most contemptuous manner possible.

It might be easy to produce many similar instances of insolence in that class, to show the bad effects of placing them so much above their proper sphere in society. It is a well-

known fact that the extravagance of the steward's room is too frequently the cause of so many of our nobility leaving their princely homes in England, to reside abroad in some retired villa on the Italian shores, or possibly in the south of France. It is in England alone that servants are supposed to require the same accommodation as their masters ; and to such an absurd length is this practice carried, that in some families the housekeeper, the cook, the housemaid, the laundress, and the butler, have each their separate sitting-rooms, and the first-mentioned has two servants in livery solely to attend her will and pleasure. But though Mr. and Lady Julia Read were extravagant to excess, they did not adopt this custom, because the size of their house made it impossible to have all these distinct sitting-rooms. Their extravagance in dress and in their *cuisine* was, however, beyond all bounds ; and now on this ill-fated morning they were cogitating how it was possible to pay their bills—bills which had accumulated for the last twelve months, for all Lady Julia's various extravagances : many articles of dress which she had never once worn, and others not more than once or twice. Mr. Read was not less to blame, owing,

as he did, hundreds to his shoemaker, and hundreds to his tailor, and we are afraid to mention how much to his glover. He laid these ugly bills on the table, and tried to look with nonchalance on such an ominous heap ; he could not, however, maintain an appearance of indifference, being alone with his wife. So sitting down by her, he hastily exclaimed, " By Jove ! this is a bad business ; what does your ladyship now advise ? Your suggestions," he continued, in that sneering manner which he sometimes used,—“ your suggestions are generally so bright, so *à propos*, that I trust you mean to favour me with something brilliant ; for I confess that I am quite at a loss to know how to proceed.”

It was a rare thing for Lady Julia to show much emotion ; but on the present occasion she did. She could not shut her eyes to the fact that they were utterly ruined ; that unless some extraordinary resource could be hit upon they were irrecoverably ruined. She felt no compunction, no sorrow at having brought this misery in a great measure on her husband's house. Her only predominant feeling was, how to extricate herself from this dilemma ; and it was the shame of being

obliged to ask in that quarter where she had been accustomed to command, which made her broad red cheeks a shade paler, and her strong voice a shade less masculine. She knew that what her husband said was perfectly true, and that she alone must think of some remedy.

“Where is your nephew, sir?” said she; “he must help me at this moment. The sight of a few bills for a few pounds appears to have scared away the little wit you once possessed. But mark my words, if I find money for you on this occasion, remember it is the last, and that you must expect your share from my generosity, instead of my waiting your niggardly supply as heretofore. Are you content to leave everything in my hands?”

Mr. Read actually writhed under his wife’s words. He was thoroughly devoid of principle, — but good-natured, and though, from Lady Julia’s vehement manner, he felt convinced that she meant to raise money to satisfy their present necessities, under false pretences, he yet stood in so much need of it that he scarcely dared to make any reply. There is no man who does not shrink from receiving money from his wife’s hands, and who would not

rather employ every other method to obtain it than be obliged to ask his wife to advance him pounds, shillings, and pence. This is a very natural feeling, and one that should be encouraged in every way, because it is certainly much better that the husband should have the supreme direction in all money matters. Mr. Read paced up and down the room for five minutes, and then Lady Julia taking out her watch, said,—

“Five minutes more I give you to consider; if at the end of that time you still remain undecided, my part is taken.”

More pacing up and down followed this speech, and he was beginning to rebel against having his will fettered in this way, when his eyes glanced towards the table, and there in all their glory he beheld the pile of bills; then stopping short in front of his wife,

“Woman!” he said, “do you still persist in not aiding me, unless you have the entire disposal of everything?”

“I do!—not a word more!”

And this weak man, throwing himself into his chair, said, “I give it all up to you.”

A gleam of triumph and exultation shot across her face; and, having secured her

victory, she proceeded, like a skilful general, to heal the wounds her vigorous attack had made. Laying aside that hauteur and coldness which she had before assumed, she approached her husband, and, in soft and winning tones, told him, it was his good alone which had brought her to this determination. She then softened things down as much as she could, looked very sweet and tender, and so considerately recommended a ride in the park, that the easy-tempered man was quite happy again; and mounted his horse with the firm conviction that, however disagreeable his wife might be in other respects, she had decidedly a good head for business.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HER husband had scarcely left her, when Lady Julia, retiring to her own boudoir, desired that no visitors might be admitted but her nephew: who she wished to be sent for immediately. The man bowed, and withdrew; but had not the least idea where this said nephew was to be found. Scarcely had he quitted her ladyship when he returned with a card, saying, that the gentleman who gave it would take no denial, but positively insisted on seeing her. She turned very pale on seeing the name; and angrily exclaimed, "Say I am not at home—say—say anything. I will not see this man:" but, on perceiving the servant's astonishment at this unusual excitement, she continued, "I will not see him, while Mr. Read is out."

A scarcely perceptible smile curled the mustachioed lip of the Italian valet, as her ladyship

uttered these last words ; for servants, who see their superiors at all hours, are generally pretty well acquainted with all the shades of their character.

Again the servant returned, saying, that he could not get rid of this troublesome visitor ; who said, he would patiently wait in the hall till Mr. Read returned.

Behold all her ladyship's well-laid schemes disconcerted ! But, trusting to ready wit and plenty of assurance to get over this disagreeable interview, she intimated that she was at home to this gentleman, but to no one else : her nephew always excepted. Another moment, and Mr. Selby was in the room.

Lady Julia rose to receive him ; and bowing with that air of perfect good-breeding she knew full well how to assume, begged to know to what she was indebted for the honour of such an early visit. " Sir," her ladyship continued, " I have scarcely, I believe, ever seen you, since my charming cousin married : then we were all young together ; and I hear that Mrs. Selby is the only one of those cousins, whose beauty has not suffered by the lapse of time."

Mr. Selby coldly replied, his wife was well ;

and then begged to inquire if Lady Julia was expecting her nephew that evening.

Her ladyship did not immediately answer : this, she perceived, was a *leading* question ; and she knew full well what would follow.

But Mr. Selby so earnestly fixed his eyes upon her whilst waiting for her reply, that she at length said, she had not seen her nephew for two days ; nor did she know exactly where he was. If he was in town, it was probable he would call upon her ; “and,” she continued, “I will give him any message you will leave with me. It is a pity to detain you, Mr. Selby ; because I know *country people* have always so much to do in their flying visits to London.”

“I am much obliged to you, Lady Julia ; but I must see Mr. Read myself. And now permit me to say, that my journey to town is undertaken solely to relieve my daughter from those annoying attentions—to use no harsher term—which your nephew has persisted in paying her. Allow me also to add, that the very prominent part your ladyship has taken in thus disagreeably trying to force a girl, from fear of what the world may say, to marry a person she dislikes—one who has behaved to

her without the least shadow of delicacy—has so much astonished me, that I must beg, madam, you will distinctly state to me what your intentions were respecting my daughter, and what made you so anxious to have her married to your nephew. Her amiability of character alone would not, I feel sure, have induced you to think of her as a match for him. Be so good, therefore, madam, as to tell me what your intentions were.”

Lady Julia Read was completely thrown aback by this straightforward speech—quite petrified; and in vain tried to appear cool and collected: when suddenly it occurred to her that Mr. Selby must be ignorant of the objection that many could urge of the wildness of her nephew’s life. This idea so far renovated her courage, that she began to expatiate upon his love at first sight—about his being captivated with Miss Selby. She spoke of her beauty—her sweetness of disposition—her—her—“*tout ensemble*, I would say, is so perfect—her figure exquisite! Can *you* wonder, Mr. Selby—you who are acknowledged to be a connoisseur in beauty—can you wonder that my nephew was captivated by your lovely daughter? and

that I, forgetting the want of present means on his part, warmly seconded his suit. Eventually, of course, he will succeed his uncle. That we have as yet failed must always be a disappointment. But, perhaps," she continued, in an animated, gay tone, "we have not failed. Perhaps Mr. Selby is now so impatient to see Mr. Read, that he may settle all the essential articles of marriage."

"Cease, Lady Julia!—I entreat you: say no more. And let me now tell you that I have positively forbidden my daughter ever more to hold any intercourse whatever with your nephew: I have prohibited her ever coming to this house. And I now wait to tell your nephew that I am aware of some part of his former life; that—awful to relate—hints have been given me of his being already married (which, God forbid!) to some foreigner. Should he again attempt to annoy my daughter, I shall commence legal proceedings against him. *This* is the purport of my visit, Lady Julia. My daughter detests a wretch who would have sunk her into the depths of shame and misery: though Heaven forbid she should ever hear more than that his character is disreputable! I wish her not to know, so early

in life, the frightful excesses which I am given to understand have been committed by your nephew; nor to have her pure mind tarnished by hearing of such vices. She has throughout this sad affair shown a strength and energy of character which has delighted me. Remember, Lady Julia, I speak; not in wrath and anger, but in sorrow of heart; to think that such wickedness should exist among those who, from their station in life, ought to set a better example. And now, Lady Julia, after what has passed, it is useless for you to deny that you know not where your nephew is concealed,—for I move not till he appears.”

Lady Julia positively shook in her chair from excess of rage. But what most vexed her was, that Mr. Selby should have discovered that there was an indelible stain on her nephew's character, and should have it in his power to make public his failure in seeking to win his daughter. And, after all, to fail in obtaining Miss Selby's fortune—which she persisted in believing was something considerable—was almost more than she could bear. She knew, however, she was likely to gain more by swimming with the stream than struggling against its current; so, bursting into a flood of

tears, and covering her face with the finest lace handkerchief, in a voice broken by sobs, she exclaimed, "Oh, Mr. Selby, what have you said?—what cruel words? My nephew married, as you have insinuated!—the bare idea fills me with horror!—married?—how cruel! What wickedness! thus to blacken his character! Indeed, indeed, Mr. Selby, I loved your child. I thought her so suited in every way to my dear nephew (Mr. Selby could scarcely forbear smiling at these words); I thought Augustus charming, and her not less so: indeed, I am astonished that you should thus defame his character to me who am so nearly related to him. Can you think it possible that I could countenance such a character as you have insinuated my nephew to be?—that I could urge him to pay such marked attention to your daughter? Really, Mr. Selby, from one in your profession, I should not have expected such base and injurious suspicions."

"Will you listen to me, Lady Julia?" coldly interrupted Mr. Selby; "I do not say Mr. Read is married; I merely stated the reports I have heard;" and he repeated, in a slow, measured tone, all that Miss —— had men-

tioned to his daughter. Lady Julia did not dare trust herself to look at Mr. Selby, but keeping the handkerchief firmly pressed over her face, she remained perfectly silent during this recital. He concluded by asking, in a solemn manner, whether she denied his statement—that there were parts in Mr. Read's character too black to be looked over? There was something, even to Lady Julia, rather awful in telling such a downright falsehood. Five minutes passed away: she made no answer: she felt that his eyes were fixed intensely on her: ten minutes elapsed before she uncovered her face: when, wiping her eyes, and hastily rising, she with violence drew down the blind, exclaiming, "Mr. Selby, astonishment has hitherto kept me silent. I deny your statement. I do deny such baseness. I do deny the chief of your complaints. That a youthful flirtation was once carried on, I will not attempt to disprove; but I do deny that you have any right whatever thus to force yourself on one who has certainly never injured you, and thus abuse a defenceless woman and her innocent nephew before her face. I assert such conduct to be totally unworthy of one calling himself a gen-

tleman;" she stopped, a little startled to see that Mr. Selby was writing down all she said; "and I demand," she continued, with greater effrontery and assurance, — "I demand," raising her voice, "what business you have to cross-question me as to any of my actions. What was Mr. Selby to her," she added, "that she was obliged to answer all the questions he chose to ask: things," she continued, in an angry tone, "have indeed come to a pretty pass when a lady is thus insulted in her own house!"

During all this storm, Mr. Selby remained perfectly calm and collected, wondering if her angry tones would ever cease;—at length he began:—

"Nothing, Lady Julia—nothing would give me so much pleasure as to feel quite certain that your nephew's character was unimpeachable. Present appearances seem, certainly, strongly against him; and amongst his own sex he is but little esteemed; still if he can prove himself perfectly free from blame, or," he added, "from crime, I shall be rejoiced: though, at the same time, I positively declare my daughter shall never marry him."

This was said in such a decided manner

that Lady Julia felt very uncomfortable as to the result; and visions of bills unpaid, and creditors clamorous for payment, floated disagreeably through her disturbed brain. Still she knew there was nothing like gaining time; and stifling her anger, she resumed her seat, and began wondering when her nephew would appear. Mr. Selby finding, at length, that the whole day was slipping away, bethought himself that perhaps at Mr. Read's club he might hear something of him. He again repeated his assurance to Lady Julia that nothing would ever induce his daughter to marry her nephew; that he positively forbade all further intercourse; that his daughter's happiness had been much disturbed by all this affair; and that, unless Mr. Read desisted from all further importunities, he should be under the necessity of resorting to more vigorous measures. As he was in the act of taking leave, he turned quickly round, saying, "I feel sure that your ladyship is acquainted with your nephew's place of concealment. Another day he may perhaps have decided on the right course, and have made up his mind to meet me."

As Lady Julia bowed her visitor out of the

room, she probably wished, as the famous Madame Montesson did on a similar occasion, that he would never again make his appearance there.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SCARCELY was the street-door closed, when a slight noise was perceptible on one side of the room, and through a small door, who should enter but Mr. Read, looking as pleased as possible.

“ Well, my dear aunt, you have fought my battle manfully, and I am under eternal obligations to you. The old buck was rather a stiffish kind of fellow, eh, Lady Julia? I doubt whether I should have settled him so well myself. Ha! ha! ha! I could never have stayed cooped up there so long, had I not been highly amused by the old parson’s talk; more especially with the fine flourish at the end of his speech, forbidding me positively from making any further attempts to get hold of his little girl. Ha! ha! ha! that was really too good. But what a state you worked yourself up into, aunt! Bless me! I thought

you would at one time have scratched the fellow's eyes out."

"Better have scratched his ears off; for I can tell you he hears a great deal too quickly. But a truce to this joking, and tell me, nephew, how you could be such a fool as to let this Spanish flirtation ever become known. You are really a greater idiot than I took you for. A pretty person you are to toil for day and night, and then for me to discover that you have been disgracing yourself by flirting to such a degree with a Spanish singer!—a Spanish girl of mean birth—even going such lengths that old Selby positively declares he heard you were married. Ay, that he did: he declares hints were given that such was the case. Are you not ashamed of yourself?—Are you not ——"

"Lady Julia, I am no longer a child; so hold your tongue, or else speak to me in a more becoming manner."

"More becoming manner, indeed! Am I to bear such unheard of rudeness from a country parson—to be subjected to vile suspicions—to have my name mixed up with disgraceful histories for your sake, and then not receive a little gratitude? Begone, sir, and

let me never see you again. Begone hence, and return to your Spanish love! Go, and see the merchant's daughter! Go! This is the end of all my speculations:—you show yourself unworthy of them.” As she said this, she was greatly excited, and exclaimed, “So it is all up with Miss Selby! No fortune of hers will ever benefit you, or enable you to live luxuriously. No advantages shall accrue to you from her appointment in the household. I give you up entirely for the future. I have been working like a galley slave to advance your suit.”

“And to pay your own bills, Lady Julia,” interrupted her nephew, in a sneering tone.

“Peace!” she screamed; “peace, or you will drive me mad. You are a good-for-nothing wretch! A pretty mess you have made of this affair.”

“I tell you what, Lady Julia; if you beard me much longer, you will rue it! I could tell you something to make you start with horror. I could ——”

“Oh! say on, say on; do not let any attention to my feelings prevent your speaking plainly. You are so considerate: it is delightful! You learnt it, of course, of the fair Spaniard.”

“By Jove! I will not stand this any longer. Lady Julia, I am married! ay, married to one who, to deceive you, I have called a Spanish girl. I am married to an English girl: one, too, whom you shall own as your niece.”

“Oh! Augustus, you have killed me! It is false: you are lying: tell me so, or else:—wretch!—profligate, abandoned wretch!—fly from my sight! Married! My brain is on fire—I do not believe this report, Mr. Selby: I do not believe it. Ha! ha! your daughter is the bride—ha! ha!—my nephew—ha! ha!—married! and Miss Selby’s rich—ah!—and good—you have ki—ll—ed——” such violent hysterics here came on as to choke further utterance.

Really shocked at the state of excitement she was in, her nephew led her to the sofa, and obliged her to lie down. With great difficulty he kept her quiet: the fever in her brain seemed to increase: she was evidently raving with delirium. Seriously alarmed, he rang the bell, and desired the footman to send Lady Julia’s maid, and to call in a medical man. Promptly were his orders executed; and a few hours afterwards, she was com-

paratively herself: though at intervals speaking of Miss Selby as the cause of all her sufferings; and still returning to the dreadful truth that Mr. Read was married. Towards night, she became, however, composed: and after administering strong opiates, the physician withdrew.

Though highly exasperated with Lady Julia, her delectable nephew felt only too keenly that he could not exist an hour without her ready wit to extricate him from all difficulties. Accordingly, at twelve o'clock the following day he bent his steps to Manchester Square; he found Lady Julia pale indeed from all the excitement of the preceding day, but otherwise quite herself. She received him in the most chilling manner; scarcely deigning to answer him. He looked unutterable things, and approaching the ottoman on which she sat, leant over her, entreating her forgiveness—entreating her to restore him to favour. She shook her head. He spoke with still greater vehemence of his sorrow: of the agony he had endured the previous night.

“Could it equal mine, Augustus?” she said. “Oh! is it really true that you are married?”

He looked aghast, but said, “Lady Julia,

kind as you have ever been to me, hear me. I was very young; I hardly knew you. I—I—was left a good deal to myself. I—did marry a—a—merchant's daughter!"

"A merchant's daughter!"

"Yes, a merchant's daughter. But I have not seen her for ages: know nothing of her. Now, dear aunt, listen to me. You alone love me. My wife detests me, hates me, spurns me from her sight, and lives with her rich old uncle in the city. No one knows she is related to me. Will you not forgive this youthful imprudence? will you not again give me hopes—hopes of some day possessing Miss Selby?"

"Good Heavens! Augustus, you are mad!"

"No, dearest aunt, not mad, but ruined,—irretrievably ruined if you will not aid and counsel me; if you will not forget that you ever heard of this unfortunate marriage, and let me again belong to you as a marrying man; as one ready to accept Miss Selby directly, if she pleases."

"But—"

"No buts, dearest aunt; really you must do as I wish."

"But what would the world say to us? How could we defend such morality as this?"

Lady Julia feared no higher reproach than that inflicted by the world: she feared not the anger of a jealous God.

"There will be no occasion to defend it. You shall tell Mr. Selby I am out of town. I would not see him for the world. Tell him from me, that as a lad I did flirt most desperately with a Spaniard, but nothing more."

"Really I am half frightened at doing such things: but such things have been done and said before; and there is many a character now deemed irreproachable no better in reality than your own."

"Then you will consent to my plan?"

"Yes, I will do all in my power to promote your welfare: but," she added, eagerly, "on one condition alone; which is, that you give yourself up entirely to my view of the case, and follow promptly all my suggestions. Still, Augustus, this really does seem such an iniquitous affair that I don't think I can consent to it."

Her nephew was on the point of replying, when the door opened, and the servant announced that there were two creditors below, so pressing in their demands that he could not get rid of them.

Lady Julia started, and her companion looked expressively at her. "Send them away," she said: "I have no money."

"They will take no denial, my lady; and the milliner says she has already waited two years, and must now have five hundred pounds."

"Good Heavens! Leave us, and tell her to return to-morrow. We are particularly engaged, and cannot now attend to such people."

The footman withdrew, and Mr. Read, seizing with avidity on these circumstances, urged still more vehemently the necessity of his marrying an heiress to extricate them from all their difficulties.

The importunity of two such large creditors convinced Lady Julia that it was absolutely expedient to comply with her nephew's wishes; and she now told him she would forget his past life, and think only of promoting his union with Miss Selby. He pleaded his extreme youth as an excuse for all past sins; and argued that the woman preferred at eighteen is generally very different from the favoured one of a more mature age. "I love Miss Selby," he continued, "her very aversion to me makes me love her more. And now,

dearest aunt, we must concoct some plan of operations."

The first thing that Lady Julia insisted on was that Mr. Read, as they had before agreed, should not see Mr. Selby. This might be easily accomplished: and after cogitating over various plans, and finding some objection to all, it was settled that the best expedient would be for Mr. Read to go to some hotel in town, where he was not known, and remain there under a feigned name, until Mr. Selby's departure for Torrington. He might leave a letter on the table to his uncle and aunt, stating he had been persuaded by some young friends to take a short continental tour; that his aunt might keep up the deception (the nephew did not doubt her ability to do this); and as of course Mr. Selby would naturally wish speedily to return home, the falsehood need only be kept up a few days.

"But the wife,—*your* wife," repeated Lady Julia, "she must be kept quite out of sight. Miss Selby knows nothing about her: she merely hears that there are awkward stories afloat about the wildness of your former life. We will concede this point, as it will act as a blind to her family, and prevent their fancying

anything worse. If you had not been such a fool as to marry, all would have succeeded admirably. Miss Selby never appeared to me to dislike you: besides, many a girl accepts a man whom she has once refused. But who could have told her anything about you? Something must be done: such things have been heard of as destroying the register; and then the marriage could not be proved. Something decisive, I repeat, must be done, to keep this woman in the background; for all our best schemes will be ruined should her existence become known. However, it is too late this afternoon to do anything, so take your departure, and do not let me see you till you hear from me. Leave your address, so that if I want your aid, I may send for you. Adieu! may we go on and prosper. But stop!—did I tell you that Colonel Selwyn has appeared again, and means to move heaven and earth to get hold of Miss Selby? And I have this morning heard from my great friend, the Duchess of Z——, who says her Majesty appears much pleased with her new maid of honour, and had been heard to say, jokingly, she hoped no one would think of marrying her. Several more

falsehoods did Lady Julia string together, to show her nephew of what consequence Miss Selby was, and what a *grand coup* it would be if he could succeed in winning her. She declaimed about our heroine's beauty and accomplishments; vowing she had the most fascinating manner, the whitest arm and hand, and prettiest foot in town. Now that her *few* scruples were overcome by the hope of gaining her fortune, she was most eager to promote the scheme of her nephew's marriage; stipulating, however, that she should be the prime mover in the whole affair.

Lady Julia had not lived half a century without being fully aware that nothing was so likely to make her nephew attend to her suggestions, and follow up keenly his pursuit of Miss Selby, as firmly persuading him that the young lady was enamoured of him. At present she did not perceive clearly how this was to be done; but she thought, that by means of a letter, something tangible might be obtained to show him as a proof of her affection for him. Her active mind was already very busy with a variety of schemes.

The nephew, delighted at her cordial co-operation, resigned everything into her hands,

and then prepared, after profuse thanks and much gratitude, to depart; but as he was leaving the room, he turned quickly round, and inquired if she had seen her old servant Howell lately. She replied in the affirmative. He then said it had occurred to him that something might be gained by placing her with his wife—as the latter was ill, and required a nurse: but that Lady Julia was the best judge of all these matters; and that if she would kindly take the matter in hand, it would doubtless succeed.

We will now see what has become of Mr. Selby.

CHAPTER XXV.

AFTER leaving Lady Julia Read, Mr. Selby resolved to take a turn in the park, to shake off the agitation and commotion of mind into which he had been thrown. Angry and vexed as he was at his whole interview with this violent woman, he was not one to give way to wrathful thoughts. The more he reflected on all he had heard and seen, the more grateful he felt that his darling child had been saved from the certain misery which the proposed connexion with such a man would have occasioned her, and the becoming domesticated with a woman of such a despicable character as the one he had just left. This, he reflected, is one of the many instances in which those endued with talents, and possessed of advantages denied to the generality of mankind, and gifted with the means of doing extensive good, pervert

their talents to the worst purposes, and train up their children in the same pernicious paths. And yet, thought he, "I doubt not that this very Lady Julia would have felt horrified at the bare idea of a woman in humbler life trying to gloss over what I am convinced her nephew has been guilty of. I feel, from her manner, he is married. Oh, fearful depravity ! It is generally the case that they who are the least virtuous themselves, pay some little respect to those who aim at a higher standard of perfection ; and express the greatest detestation of sins which are but too often the result of that gross ignorance that debases one-third of the population in this country : highly favoured as it undoubtedly is in many respects."

As Mr. Selby walked on, completely absorbed in these bitter reflections, he could not but feel deeply wounded and grieved that his daughter, on her first appearance in the world, should have such a disagreeable awakening from those dreams of youth and pleasure with which she had contemplated her first season in the gay metropolis ; and he resolved that the sun should not have risen many hours, before he again found his way to Manchester-square, to endeavour to obtain an interview

with the younger Mr. Read. Were there not something radically wrong about him, Mr. Selby felt, he would have confronted him and denied all these injurious suspicions; as it was, he tacitly admitted them by not attempting to disprove them: and again this good father thanked the Almighty for having preserved his daughter from forming such an attachment.

In pursuance of the resolution adopted by Mr. Selby the previous afternoon, the following morning saw him, at an early hour, at Mr. Read's door; early for a London visit, though the clock had struck eleven some time before: indeed, the streets were already filled with that wondrous mass of human beings, whom business had called forth from their numerous haunts to their daily occupations.

On inquiring for Mr. Augustus Read, Mr. Selby was respectfully informed that he had left town. The suspicion that this was a subterfuge to avoid seeing him, made the blood mantle in Mr. Selby's manly brow: but quickly suppressing all emotion, he requested to see Lady Julia; and without more ado, walked into the hall. The servant civilly requested to know his name, and immediately

the French butler, turning insolently round, said, "*Madame, n'est pas visible à tel que lui ;*" so apt and ready are servants to take the cue from those above them. Lady Julia returned answer by the footman, who was obliging enough to go and inquire,—that suffering much from head-ache would prevent her having the pleasure of seeing Mr. Selby ; she, therefore, presented her compliments to him, and would not detain him any longer. After being refused, it was rather a difficult matter for a gentleman to persist in seeing a lady in her own house, whether she would or not ; and had not Mr. Selby felt that he owed it to his daughter to persist in his request, it is probable he would have retired : as it was, he begged the servant to let Lady Julia know that he would wait her leisure. The domestic, more well-bred than his mistress, led the way to the drawing-room.

As Mr. Selby glanced round the room, he had time to examine the innumerable little nick-nacks with which it was crowded ;—German-glass vases, Dresden-china ornaments, ottomans embroidered in the most costly manner, hot-house plants of every hue, and lovely from their luxuriant growth : almost every

description of easy chair that this most luxurious of all ages has invented, and various articles of costly workmanship were crowded into this really beautiful saloon. Mr. Selby felt doubly gratified that his daughter had steadily rejected the man who would have made her mistress of all this profusion: for at her age these things are more prized than later in life. To a man like Mr. Selby, accustomed to be constantly and profitably employed, it was irksome, in the highest degree, to be left thus idling through the greatest part of a summer's day. The books scattered on the table were not likely to interest him: Eugene Sue's last French novels, illustrated with such pictures that it was a disgrace to any lady to have seen on her table, were mingled with some of the worst specimens of English novels of the day. As Mr. Selby turned them over, one after another, he began to despair of finding anything congenial to his turn of mind; then, as a last resource, he walked to the further end of the room, where stood a small cabinet, exquisitely carved and inlaid with mother of pearl. It was so beautiful that it allowed of very minute examination; and was of that peculiar style of workmanship which, in the time of Cardinal

Wolsey, was so famous. Such cabinets are sometimes seen in houses bearing that date: the solid oak or cedar of which they are made is worked into such different shapes and forms, that we wonder how the ingenious artist could ever have invented them. On opening the doors of the upper part, are seen eight little drawers, having on each a portrait representing one of the celebrated characters of the sixteenth century,—the principal figure being the Cardinal himself. On touching a secret spring, in the inside of these drawers, at the further end of each, out springs a little drawer, which is so cleverly hid that it is only discoverable by the initiated few. Mr. Selby did not, of course, venture to open the door, so that the drawers were not visible to him; but the author deemed it might not be uninteresting to some readers to have that described which is not frequently met with. In vain we try to rival these beautiful productions of our forefathers. How far more beautiful were their devices than ours: their Louis Quatorze glasses are most highly esteemed: again, the old-fashioned chatelains which our grandmothers wore, even these cannot be made now so handsome and solid as heretofore.

Ample time was allowed to Mr. Selby to examine all the articles of *vertù* with which Lady Julia's room abounded; for the clock had announced that the hour of two was past, when Mr. Selby thought he heard Lady Julia approaching: she was talking in a subdued tone, it is true, yet still he fancied he recognised her harsh, discordant voice. He ran to the door, and on opening it perceived Lady Julia in the act of descending, evidently equipped for driving in the park. He stepped quickly to her, saying, he would not detain her five minutes; but as he had been waiting three hours, he must request her ladyship would attend to him for this brief period.

Lady Julia's amazement was beyond description, and only equalled by her indignation. That any one should presume to dictate to her, and before all the liveried attendants, was too much: but there was something in Mr. Selby's very composed and gentleman-like manner which awed her; and not really knowing what to do, she led the way in sullen silence to the drawing-room. The door was hardly shut before the servants gave a suppressed laugh, at the expense of their mistress,—so ridiculous had she made herself even in their eyes.

Again Mr. Selby stated in clear and distinct terms, that the object of his visit was to obtain the place of her nephew's abode. She replied, that by a letter received that morning she learned he had left England for the Continent; that not being able to obtain Miss Selby's consent, and still loving her deeply, he had thought it best for both parties that he should leave London for a time. The surprise and pleasure with which her visitor heard this announcement was so great, that Lady Julia could scarcely suppress a smile. But suddenly it flashed across his mind, Is this really the case? or is he only kept out of sight till I leave town? The thought rushed unbidden into his mind, and looking steadily and fixedly at Lady Julia, he asked her if she felt certain her nephew had gone? if she thought he was capable of doing that which was in fact the only honourable course he could pursue? Her ladyship replied, he was capable of anything that was proper and honourable; and after receiving this letter, she had never doubted for a moment that he had left England.

Though Mr. Selby's suspicions were painfully roused to consider this merely a *ruse de*

guerre, he could do no more, and took his leave; fervently hoping that this was the last interview he should ever have with Lady Julia Read. After quickly finishing his other business in town, he repaired to Windsor, and was fortunate enough to find his daughter at liberty, and overjoyed to see him. He related all that he had done; but Catherine felt painfully certain that Mr. Read had not left England. She mentioned to her father, that one of the chief attractions she was supposed to possess, was having a large private fortune of her own; and he was greatly amused at such an absurd idea. But, weary and dispirited, he felt that in point of fact he had done nothing. He desired Catherine, should she receive any more letters from her tormentor, to return them unopened to Lady Julia: but not to add a line herself; for he fully believed her persecutor's character was so very bad, that if he or Lady Julia once got hold of her signature, they might make it serve their own purposes: he even cautioned her to write the direction in a feigned hand. After giving her the best advice, in the tenderest manner, this kind father was obliged to tear himself away from his truly amiable child; humbly recommending

her to the care of that great and good God who watches over all, and who Mr. Selby felt would effectually shield his sweet daughter, did she but firmly trust in Him. The parting was sad; and what parting between parent and child can be otherwise? The uncertainty with which all things in this life are surrounded, fills even the most cheerful with sad forebodings; and as Catherine wept on her father's shoulder, she felt how willingly she would have given up all the brilliant advantages of her present situation to have returned with him to her early home. But she checked her tears, and spoke cheerfully of what now devolved upon her. Her father also cheered her; and so far succeeded in drawing her thoughts from herself, that he left her with a bright smile on that sunny brow.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN these days of railroads and expedition, it is quite a misfortune to be far from one of the principal lines. So thought Mr. Selby, when, after quitting the railroad, he was obliged to proceed on his journey in the stage-coach. Still, to him it was less irksome than to many; he had been accustomed to travelling by the mail in earlier days, when going at the rate of nine or ten miles an hour was considered astonishing speed. His companions in the coach were not likely to enliven the weary way, and make it appear shorter. One was an elderly woman, a housekeeper, with the usual accompaniment of such useful old dames, a huge basketful of sandwiches and apples—pleasant companions in the inside of a carriage, on a hot summer's day. The only other passenger was an aged gentleman-like man, but so extremely deaf that he could not

hear one word of anything that passed. But the most tiresome journeys do at last come to an end, and as the clock was striking seven the coach rattled up the village street, and halted at the sign of the "Ploughshare;" a very appropriate name, as the whole population of Torrington were agriculturists. Leaving his portmanteau in charge of the honest landlady, Mr. Selby set off to walk home; and as he did so the refreshing evening air revived him much during the short walk of a quarter of a mile to his own house through pleasant fields, at the bottom of which was the river gliding quietly along the valley; and the pleasure he anticipated of meeting his wife and children put him in high spirits. Nothing had occurred at the Rectory during his absence; all had gone on in one regular routine, each one happy and contented. Scarcely was his well-known footstep heard on the gravel walk, when a joyful shout was given by little Tiny; who, having stationed himself so as to get the first glimpse of his dear papa, gave notice to all within the house of his arrival; and very soon he was surrounded by his loving children, headed by their sweet mother. The sun was at the moment setting, and as it glided

behind the hills spread a golden hue around, lighting up each one of this lovely group. The nightingale in the acacia was heard warbling its clear sweet notes; and as Mr. and Mrs. Selby looked round on their assembled darlings, they lifted up their hearts in gratitude to the great Giver of all.

Tiny was the first to break silence, by asking after his sister; his little voice was never heard unheeded, and smiling sweetly on his youngest darling, Mr. Selby answered all his questions. "And now, my loves," he continued, "the dew begins to fall, and I think we ought to return to the house; for though the weather is fine, we must not forget our prudence at this early season of the year." Even the few days he had been absent had made a considerable difference in the foliage of the trees; several which were not quite out at his departure were now clothed in all their beauty, especially some fine lilac bushes, which appeared almost ready to burst into flower. It was such an evening as is seldom known in this favoured isle till the spring is far advanced: for with regret it must be acknowledged, that the pleasures of an English spring are too often more in the poet's imagi-

nation than in stern reality. The little drawing-room at Torrington Rectory appeared the chosen abode of peace and beauty. The bow-window, opening into the garden, was occupied by a small table, on which stood the cage containing the beautiful African parrot: a prime favourite with all the younger part of the community, as he talked and laughed inimitably! On the right side was a small rose-wood cabinet, containing shells and other curiosities, collected by the Rector's elder sons in foreign lands; the left was occupied with a little work-table, which had been given by her grandmother to Catherine, and on which stood several pieces of old china, some of them collected from different cottages in the village; light wicker chairs completed all that the bow-window contained, and made it a perfect little room in itself. Various kinds of chairs and tables were dispersed about the room, in that kind of *tidy untidiness*, if we may be forgiven the seeming contradiction, which appears to be the great merit of our modern sitting-rooms. Glasses of flowers, tastefully arranged, were grouped about on the different tables; the pianoforte was open,

and drawing materials scattered about added much to the appearance of refined enjoyment and comfort that was visible in the whole apartment. The table-cloth was now laid, and tea soon followed. Mr. Selby sat down to relate all his adventures. Innumerable were the questions about Catherine: and had he seen the Queen? and did her Majesty like Catherine? and was she this, and was she that? Mr. Selby smiled at their impatience and curiosity, and answered all their interrogations with the greatest good humour. After the little party had retired for the night, and Mrs. Selby and Susan were left alone with our traveller, he began explaining how matters stood between Mr. Read and Catherine.

“First of all,” exclaimed his wife, “tell me, does our child care for or like this Mr. Read?”

“Not at all: she cannot bear him; she has not the slightest regard for him, my dear,” replied her husband; “she dislikes his manners, his conversation, his person—everything, in short, connected with him; and of course her dislike increases daily, from the manner in

which he persecutes her. Why, will you believe it, that three days ago he had the audacity to go to Windsor, and request an interview with our daughter! Letter after letter has followed this piece of impertinence, and the last time she heard of him he even wished to name the day for their union! Such extreme audacity is really unheard of. I have not succeeded in seeing the wretched young man—for wretched I must call one so utterly devoid of all principle. Twice I called, and spent half the day with Lady Julia; who really, without exception, is the most disagreeable person I ever met with.”

He then related the substance of his interview with her. Mrs. Selby felt her blood boil at the indignities this woman had heaped on her daughter, by the systematic attack she had made upon her.

“And how has our noble girl borne all this persecution?” said she. “How has she—who had scarcely before mixed in the world without the shelter of our presence—how has she buffeted against this heartless Lady Julia?”

“Wonderfully well,” replied her husband; “her composure and strength of mind have

been surprising; she has never wavered in the slightest degree: never given Read a shadow of hope. Her health has not suffered; but she is nervous, and lives in dread of what he will do next. What chiefly vexes and annoys her, is the publicity with which Lady Julia has talked and discussed the whole affair; inserting paragraphs in the *Morning Post*, stating the match as about to take place very soon. Heaven forgive me, if I wrong her! but I cannot help suspecting that she did publish them. She tried for a long time to convince me that her nephew was very charming and good; but seeing that I knew much more than she suspected of his real character, she maintained a sullen silence."

"Is it possible? What is really the case?" exclaimed Mrs. Selby, starting up, her fine face becoming crimson. "Is it really true that he dares offer his hand to my child, when that hand is for ever the property of another?"

"Calm yourself, dearest love! you cannot be more indignant, more angry, than I am about the whole affair: but this fearful crime is not yet proved, so that we must hope

it is not yet quite so bad. Still, whatever has happened in his early life will prove an insuperable barrier to the connexion, should Catherine ever relent in his favour; which I trust and firmly believe will never be the case. If our worst suspicions prove true, it is a barrier which nothing but death can dissolve; and wretched as the existence of his poor wife must be, I cannot but hope that if there is such a person she may be discovered, and brought to identify this profligate young man as her husband. What Lady Julia urges is very true, that Read is a very common name, and that to believe this scandalous history, merely on the assertion of Miss ——, (thus he wrote to Catherine) is unjust towards him. I would not permit her to answer this letter; but, having strong reasons for suspecting the story was true, forbade him ever to approach the house, or ever again to annoy my daughter. Should they by chance meet in society, I cautioned her against showing him the slightest sign of recognition.”

After a little more conversation on this, to them, most interesting subject, Susan appeared so extremely tired and exhausted,

that her mother proposed their retiring for the night; grateful that her child was well, and had shown, under these difficult circumstances, such an amount of moral courage and good feeling.

CHAPTER XXVII.

OUR readers have not, we trust, forgotten a most interesting young mother and child that were saved from destitution, taken to a comfortable home, and treated with unbounded kindness and liberality by their kind relative, Mr. Brown. For two months this unfortunate woman lived there in more happiness and comfort than had been her portion for many a long, weary day. Her uncle, indeed, gave up everything to her; and her little boy began to thrive; his pale cheeks acquired a little bloom. Still poor Mary Read, though she felt truly thankful for so many blessings, could never feel happy: happiness in this world seemed to have fled from her. It was long since she had heard aught of her husband; and the reflection that when she was dead and gone her beloved child would stand alone in the world, often quite unnerved her: she had learnt, however, to put her trust in One who never fails, in the hour of need and affliction, to support his feeble servants. Her uncle, kind good man as he

was, told her that as long as he lived she must stay with him; that she was his sole comfort; and that whatever happened he would take charge of her son. With tears of thankfulness, she murmured her grateful thanks. She felt that her days were numbered. A dreadful cough, which allowed no rest day or night, and excessive debility, were symptoms too alarming to give her much hope. Her constitution was broken, and she felt herself, like thousands of her fellow-sufferers in our crowded towns, sinking into the grave; the victim of the neglect and breach of faith of one who, even to this moment, she fondly loved.

Strange, surpassing strange it is, that in woman's heart, where she really loves, no neglect, no ill usage, no harshness can extinguish that love: it seems to burn brighter and add fresh fuel to its already brilliant flame. Thus it was with Mary: her sole attraction to this life—that bound her to this world—was the hope of being of use to her son—of adding to his happiness; and when he laid his little curly head against her neck, she felt indeed that there was something left to live for: to bring him up religiously—to implant in his tender mind virtuous principles and desires

was the aim of her life; and to tell the truth, she had a good soil to plant, for her child was blest with a mild and teachable spirit. Day after day she felt her strength gradually declining: she felt that soon—how soon, God only knew—she must leave this darling child alone to fight against difficulties of no common sort,—disowned as he was by his father. She gently sought to make him comprehend the possibility of losing her; and though at first the poor child scarcely understood the extent of the calamity, it flashed through his mind in another instant, and he sobbed as if his heart would break. Still, when he gazed on his mother's pale face, and heard her gentle voice, child as he was, he felt as if she could not die! He flung his arms round her neck; he hung about her, saying, "Oh, why does mama talk so,—why does she grieve her little boy!" Alas! poor child! at that moment he little knew how he grieved her! She gently extricated herself from his little hands, and pointing to a glass of flowers standing on the table, she told him to fetch the white rose. He smiled, and wiping away "the tears forgot as soon as shed," gladly brought the fair flower. She took him on her knee again: she explained to him, that as he had seen that fair flower three

days before, bright and unfaded,—so was it with her some years ago. “Now, my darling,” she continued, “you see its once snowy white leaves are tinged with yellow; it droops its head, and very likely by this time to-morrow, will be quite withered. This is but a type of what we all are. You see me now—it may be in a day or two,—it may not be for years, that you will see me also droop and wither: you will see me gradually lose all strength, all love of earthly things excepting thee, my darling child;” and she kissed the streaming tears from his pale cheeks. “But,” she continued, “listen to me, my child. I do not feel well; I feel weaker than I did a week ago: these are bad signs, and will my pet break his mother’s heart with his tears?—will he not endeavour to check them, and nurse his mother?”

“I will, indeed,” cried the miserable child; “but oh, mother, who will talk to me like this when you are gone?—who will love me as you have done? Shall I be alone?” and a shudder passed through his youthful frame.

“No, my darling, you will not be alone: however much you may have to struggle against in this world, remember that you are not alone. God will be with you; and young

as you are, he will lend a willing ear to all your prayers—to all you say to him. Pray to him, my sweetest boy ; pray to him earnestly ; pray to him now with me.” And she knelt down, spreading his hands within her own, and prayed with the fervency of a mother, that this her only child might be saved from all guilt and misery—might be preserved from all the dangers and miseries which now seemed to surround him ; that they might both be united in that heaven where is joy for evermore ; “where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.”

Mrs. Read felt refreshed by this pious act : she had committed all to Him who can alone give us peace, and she now exerted herself to amuse her poor child ; for these were but sad scenes for his early days,—days which ought to have been bright and unclouded. But a deep impression had been made on his young mind. He seemed ten years older by his thoughtfulness and manner. He could hardly be persuaded to leave his mother, and he watched her every movement, and anticipated her every wish, with wonderful foresight for one so young.

Her uncle usually paid her sick-room a visit at five o'clock in the afternoon : but one day,

when confined to her bed, and suffering more than usual,—five, six, seven o'clock came, without his making his appearance: she was getting impatient,—she was in such a weak state that any change in her daily routine made her feel anxious and nervous. At this moment, when she had sent her maid to inquire what had happened, strange voices were heard in the passage: the invalid started up in bed, and listened attentively: she was satisfied that something had happened, and she called her child to the bedside, and bade him stay close to her. The poor boy had lost all colour, and apparently all strength: he was startled by this noise, for he saw how much it affected his mother; she became deadly pale, and after he reached her, she fell back on the pillow in a fainting state. The child, much terrified, knew not what to do: he bathed her pale hands with his tears, and covered her face with kisses; then suddenly recollecting what he had seen the nurse do on similar occasions, he fetched some cold water and bathed his mother's face. It was an affecting sight to see one so young performing the office of nurse to his mother: to see one who was

hardly beyond a nurse's care himself, left alone to tend another. The absence of the maid seemed to him endless. When she did return, her face told such a tale of horror—her blanched cheek and quivering lips showed so much agitation—that the child, more than ever terrified, hid his face in the counterpane, and wept bitterly. The water had had the desired effect of reviving a little consciousness in the poor invalid, and the first sounds that met her ear were the sobs of her sweet child; she started up and tried to speak, but her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth. Afterwards she said that she had a presentiment that the first thing she heard would be bad news; at last, with a desperate effort she raised herself in bed, but when she saw her maid's face, her worst suspicions seemed verified, and she faintly said, "Howell, tell me all." The poor woman shook in every limb, but reaching a cordial, she gave some to her patient, who, hastily swallowing it, said, faintly, "Perhaps it is too much for the child to bear: is it?" But he petitioned so earnestly to be allowed to remain, that his mother gave him leave to do so; the maid then began her recital.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"You know, ma'am, Mr. Brown has been in the habit, lately, of riding a good deal, much more than ——"

"Oh! do not torture me, Howell; tell me at once what has happened."

"Well, then, ma'am, the long and short of the matter is, that he has been brought home in a dying state; he has been thrown from his horse and ——"

"Oh! stop for mercy's sake," cried the wretched mother; "oh, come here, Howell; tell me, is there no hope--no hope whatever?"

The poor woman only replied with a mournful shake of the head.

"Is he sensible?" cried Mary.

"Yes, he is; at times his mind wanders, but when he thinks of you he is generally sensible, but so altered;" and the poor woman could no longer control herself, and wept bitterly.

"Oh! God of mercy, have pity on us!"

cried the mother : and she gazed wistfully at her son, who struck her as being so completely changed and altered within the last week, that she felt pretty sure he would not long survive her. "There was agony ; there was hope in that look ;" and stretching out her hand to her boy, she burst into tears. Several minutes elapsed before she was able to speak : in her reduced, weak state, the shock she had received seemed to have nearly annihilated her. The tears now fell from her eyes ; but pale as death she lay on that low bed, breathing a prayer for her only child—her child, her hope, her all in this life—and fervently did she pray that she might be resigned when she was required to leave him. "For oh !" she mentally exclaimed, "thou art a God of mercy : thou wilt soon reunite us in those mansions of bliss, where sorrows and tears are not known." While thus she prayed, her child lay by her side with intense anxiety depicted in his wan face : to him she seemed already dying. The nurse had left the room to attend her uncle, and this little child was the only attendant that poor Mary then had ! Alas ! she required no more ; and when she opened her eyes and beheld him leaning over her, she laid her hand on his head and blest him

repeatedly. Overjoyed at hearing that voice which he thought never again to have heard, he brightly smiled and asked if she was better ; at the same time arranging her pillow and giving her cool, refreshing lemonade to moisten her parched lips. "My Arthur," she began, "I must see my uncle before he dies—before we both die !" Violently as he trembled, he made a strong effort to overcome his emotions, and said in a clear though sad voice, "Mama, Howell will soon return, and then we will ask." He could not alone undertake to move his mother. His attention and nursing must of course be limited to mere trifles. And yet what is it that so often converts a sick-room into more of an earthly paradise than any other scene in life—what? but that *self* is there forgotten, and a thousand nameless attentions, too minute to be described, are hourly required." After the lapse of a few moments the maid returned, shaking in every limb. Mary's wish was made known by her son, but as he repeated it, Howell's eyes appeared frozen with horror and consternation.

"Alas, madam !" she cried, "indeed you are not able to be moved ; you must not attempt it. Mr. Brown does not wish it himself : he is much worse ; he would not know you."

“Gracious God!—is it possible?” exclaimed Mary, starting up in bed; “is it ——” her strength failed her, and prevented her from saying more. But the fever of restlessness was upon her; and again rousing herself, “Tell me,” she began, “tell me ——” a violent fit of coughing, succeeded with spitting of blood, produced such complete exhaustion that Howell thought all was over.

For more than an hour Mary neither spoke nor moved. The doctor was expected, but did not arrive; and not being able to leave her patient herself, as a last resource, Howell thought of sending the child for the physician: but he was quite ignorant of the way, and would infallibly lose himself. There was nought to be done but sit down quietly and wait for the visit of the medical man.

This was the first time that poor Arthur had sat up all night. While the maid made the necessary preparations for keeping in the fire, and prepared cordials in case his mother was able to take them, he had to perform the task of nurse, and support his mother’s head with his feeble hands. There is something indescribably solemn and saddening in sitting up at night watching by the couch of one much beloved, who is perfectly unconscious

of your presence: the flickering, uncertain light, the deep silence around you, the moaning of the wind, the death-like appearance of a form connected with all your visions of what is bright and fairest—with all your early, sunny, cheerful days, and the blue, livid hue that encircles the eyes, are enough to appal and make the most thoughtless reflect. As the poor child seated himself by the bedside, he felt for his mother's hand: cold, and apparently lifeless as it was, it seemed to him to remove that feeling of desolation and wretchedness that had nearly overpowered him; and remembering his mother's advice, he dropped down on his knees, and devoutly, with infantine earnestness, implored blessings on her head, and support and comfort for himself.

How long the child had remained in prayer is uncertain; the grey light of dawn had begun to appear, making the room even more sombre and dim, and brought with it that chilliness which is always perceived after a night's watching: this chilliness produced a most violent fit of coughing, which rang through the whole apartment. At that instant the boy was startled by Howell's look of extreme sorrow; he felt it foreboded that the last moments of his mother's life was approaching.

She came near to him and urged him with kindness to leave the room: she said it was too awful a scene for one so young to witness. She entreated him to retire into the next apartment: but her words were vain; with convulsive sobs he hung over his mother. He likewise now perceived the awful palor of death; he, for the first time, heard the painful breathing of one about to be released from all earthly care.

“He watched her breathing through the night,
Her breathing soft and low;
As in her breast the wave of life
Kept heaving to and fro.”

Once more did his beloved mother open her eyes; once more she gazed on him; a low moan was heard.

“So silently she seemed to speak,
So slowly moved about,—
As we had lent her half our powers
To eke her living out.”

That pure and chastened spirit had returned to the hands of its Creator. Her unfortunate boy fell fainting on her dead body. With much exertion, Howell raised him, and carried him from the room.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MR. BROWN did not survive his dreadful accident many hours. Naturally of a strong unbroken constitution, the medical men thought him likely to do well: but they proved mistaken, and he was now no more. He never recovered his senses, and left no directions about his affairs. No will could be found. Every room and cupboard, every chest and drawer, were ransacked to see if any memorandum could be discovered; but to no purpose. The heir-at-law was a distant cousin of Mr. Brown's, a young man now in America. It was always supposed that his niece would have inherited everything. The physician and lawyer proceeded to Mrs. Read's room, and found on the steps the poor child crying, and pale with exhaustion and terror; when he saw these two men he clung to their knees, and begged they would let him go into his

mother's room. Surprised at this request, they inquired if he was not always with his mother.

"Yes, I was, till yesterday—I mean last night, when that woman came and carried me out here, and has never let me go in since."

These words were scarcely audible, from the poor child's sobs and tears: but from what they could make out, these two gentlemen were very much surprised; and the physician, Dr. Allen, who had often seen him before, took him in his arms and knocked at the door. No answer was returned. "Where is Howell?"

"Oh, I do not know," said Arthur, trembling violently; "I left her with mama, because she said I must go away;" and here his sobbing and crying was such as really to alarm the kind-hearted Dr. Allen. He attempted to pacify him, though to his own mind all these circumstances appeared strange, and as if some underhand work had been carried on. He looked at Mr. —, the lawyer, who also intimated his fears of something wrong. They again knocked at the door, and again all was silent, till becoming seriously alarmed they attempted to force the door; it was locked

and the key gone. Immediately sending for instruments to break it open, they were obliged to wait a few minutes; minutes which to them appeared hours. But at last the men appeared, and the lock was forced open. All was death-like silence, not a sound was heard; the bed-curtains were all drawn close round the bed. With hasty step Dr. Allen conveyed his little charge to the bed-side and placed him on the ground, while he himself hastened to open the curtains. Aghast and horrified he stood. There was Mary Read—the girl he remembered so full of life and animation,—there she lay, pale, cold, and motionless. She seemed to have had acute pain in her forehead, for her hand was tightly pressed against it, and even in death there was the expression of intense suffering. The bed-clothes had been rudely torn from her; one only sheet covered the corpse, and that was but lightly thrown over: her lovely hair was gone. Altogether, the sight that met Dr. Allen's eyes was too dreadful—too horrible; and, after one hasty glance, he turned away: sickened at the heartlessness of her who must have left her in this state. Arthur became impatient to look upon his mother: to hear

her speak; but Dr. Allen felt that it was too fearful a sight for one so young. He had children of his own, and therefore could feel for this interesting child, thus early deprived of his only protection and support. He hesitated what to do; the child's impatience to see his mother increased every moment: but Dr. Allen led him towards the door. With violent screams the child resisted; when the doctor, gently holding him, said, "Arthur, if your mother was able to bid you leave her for one hour, would you not do it?"

He dried his tears, and in a quiet and subdued tone said, "Yes, if she forbids my staying with her I must obey: but she never would do so."

"Still, my dear, she might; and I promise you, you shall return and see her in one hour: will you do as I wish?"

"I will," said Arthur; and relapsing into that melancholy aspect which he had of late acquired, he allowed himself to be taken into the next room. When there Dr. Allen told him he must leave him for a short time, but he would return and take him to his mother. The doctor's kind heart smote him as he said these words, for he feared that the poor

little boy had no idea of the real state of the case. After leaving him, he first of all returned to Mrs. Read's room, where he had left Mr. —; and they proceeded to cover the body decently with the bed-clothes. After they had talked the matter over, both these gentlemen felt convinced that the nurse had been most shamefully to blame in leaving the house at such a moment; nor could they account satisfactorily to themselves for such a strange occurrence.

After the lapse of an hour, Dr. Allen went back to Arthur, whom he found most anxious for his arrival, and full of hopes that he should find his dear mother better. The doctor sat down on a chair near the child, and placing his hand on his knee, said, "Arthur, did your mother never tell you anything about death, when she was so ill?"

"Oh! yes; she used to say, that she should die some day, and that I should die likewise; and, if I was good, I should go to heaven."

"Well, my dear; and did she never tell you it was uncertain when she should die, and that she should not remain with you here, if God wished her away?"

"Yes, she did: but why do you ask me all

these questions? Mama is not dead: I long to see her, to kiss her soft cheek, and cool her burning hand."

Poor child! he little knew how many hours had elapsed since that hand was cold. Dr. Allen was sorely puzzled to know what to do or to say to this interesting child. It is always a painful and difficult matter, to make children comprehend the meaning of death.

"Do you think, if your mother was so altered, so ill, that she did not know you, that you would like to see her? If she was quite cold ——"

"Quite cold!" screamed the child; the truth suddenly bursting upon him: "Cold,—cold,—dead!"

He gasped for breath; his little eyes seemed starting out of his head, and looked transfixed with horror.

"Yes," repeated Dr. Allen, who saw it was necessary for the child's life and reason, to make him shed a few tears: "yes, she is cold; she will not know you. You may speak to her; but she will not hear you. She cannot speak words of comfort to you, now."

Here he was interrupted with a torrent of

tears, shed with such violent agitation, that Dr. Allen feared the child's slender frame would be shaken to pieces. When he became a little more calm,—

“Arthur,” said he, “you have been taught to pray to God. Kneel now down with me, and we will beg Him to have mercy on you; and to comfort and support you, under this great misfortune.”

The child dropped on his knees, and silently joining his little hands together, he prayed with his whole heart, to be supported.

Those that laugh and scoff at religion and prayer, little know the comfort that is to be derived therefrom, even in earliest childhood: it is a great mistake to suppose that children are not capable of praying. “Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not,” is a precept too often forgotten: while every other branch of learning is taught, with the most assiduous pains, excepting the “one thing needful.”

Arthur rose refreshed; and when his kind friend told him he should now see his mother, if he wished—only that he must try and not be too much overcome—he said he was ready to go; and pressing both his little hands on his fore-

head, as if to repress its visible throbbing, he walked on steadily, till he came to his mother's door. Here he trembled so violently, that he would have fallen had it not been for Dr. Allen, who took him in his arms. But he, gently opening the door, carried in the child.

All who have ever been into the chamber of death, must have felt that solemn awe steal over their senses, which seems to shut them out from the world, and all its thoughts and pleasures. The window shutters being nearly closed, the very walls appeared hung with black; and the whiteness of the bed curtains contrasted strangely with this deep and solemn twilight. This is, and must be, felt by all in every rank of life. Arthur clung tightly to Dr. Allen; who, when he approached the bed, said,—

“Arthur, my child, do you still wish to see your mother?”

“I do.”

“My dear child, the last time you saw her, she was suffering much pain. Now she is quite free from all suffering: she is perfectly happy; she is with God in heaven.”

He then opened the curtains, and showed the corpse to the child. He did not start:

his eyes were fixed on it; he appeared to be absorbed in looking on that beloved face. Dr. Allen had arranged the bed-clothes, so that only the face was visible; and it did not look in the subdued light, much paler than before.

"I must kiss her," said he, and stretched out his little hands. A cold shudder thrilled through Dr. Allen, for well he knew what the first kiss of death was to one so young. Yet he did not resist the wish, but held his little face to his mother's, merely whispering, "It is quite cold." Arthur started back from its cold touch; and then bursting into tears, declared he would die too, and never leave his mother. For a few minutes Dr. Allen suffered him to weep unrestrained; then gently lifting the almost insensible child from the bed, he carried him up stairs and left him in charge of his eldest daughter, an amiable girl, who had just arrived.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DR. ALLEN'S first impression, that the woman who had charge of Mrs. Read had turned out a rogue, was greatly strengthened when, on returning to the chamber of death, he found, on examination, that the lock of every drawer was broken, that all papers were gone, if there had been any, and that nothing now remained to the poor boy. The lawyer objected to what Dr. Allen proposed, that all should remain as it was, till the return of the heir-at-law from America. He thought it better not to lose any chance of selling the house; and, accordingly, three days after Mr. Brown's death, it was advertised for sale, with all the furniture belonging to it. Then came the question what was to become of the little boy. Advertisements were placarded all over the town, offering rewards to any one who would give any information of Ann Howell; for, till she

was found, nothing could be known of the wishes of Mrs. Read, lately deceased.

But Dr. Allen's pity and compassion was not confined to mere words. After having seen his mother cold and dead, the poor child sat perfectly still; for hours he did not attempt to speak: sad and silent, he looked the picture of unutterable woe. His hands felt cold and clammy, his breath came quickly; and after remaining some time in this state, he gave a sudden start, and fell back apparently in a swoon. For two whole days he remained in this perfectly unconscious state. Miss Allen attended him with the most assiduous care, never leaving him for a moment; and on the third day, to her great relief, he turned round and sighed. This was the first sign of consciousness he had yet shown, and was hailed by his kind nurse with great joy, as a proof that at last the fever was giving way to the remedies used by her father. Poor child! well had it been for him if he had never been roused from this slumber, but that it had proved to him the slumber of death. On the sixth day he was so much better that Dr. Allen intended to remove him to his own house.

On being apprised of this, Arthur appeared very much overcome, and said, in a faint voice, "Oh! let me see mama's room once more!" Deeming it better to comply with his smallest request than to thwart him in any degree, Miss Allen took him to the room. The bed still remained: the fair form it had so long borne was gone;—gone to that cold, dark grave where, sooner or later, we must all go. And can it be denied that, generally, those are taken who can least be spared?—They are *mercifully* taken, as we are told, from the evils to come. Poor Arthur could not walk from his bed to his mother's chamber, his kind nurse carried him: she raised him gently in her arms. Had he been her own son, she could not have devoted herself more to him. She wrapped his skeleton limbs in flannel; she soothed him, and spoke cheerfully, and gave him some flowers. She almost dreaded herself going into this room, where so much that sickens and saddens the heart had happened. Yet as it was her father's wish that she should do so, with great composure she obeyed. The little boy trembled violently when he approached the door, and gave a shuddering scream when he saw the

bed on which, one week before, he had seen his mother laid. His feelings were beyond those of a mere child. No one is more thoroughly convinced than the author how mistaken is the idea that children do not feel as acutely as those of maturer years: that they do so can be proved by every day's experience; the only difference being, that in early youth we do not dwell on sorrow with that *intensity*—I may almost say that melancholy pleasure—which we are but too apt to do in later life. And how much wiser—how infinitely more blest,—to be able to turn from one's sorrow to a bright flower, or kind friend, as childhood does; smiling and feeling as bright and as happy as if no such things as tears were known.

“It is full sad, and sweet to gaze on the mortal remains of one whom in life we were wont to admire and to love. It is full sad to think how that countenance which was of late so rich in beauty and lively emotions, and how those eyes which glistened so lustreously, and the tongue which could discourse with highest wisdom, or with holiest eloquence, have all become the prey of death, and are for ever dark, motionless, and mute. Yet I ween,

amidst all the kindly lamentations which sorrows waken in such a moment, it is also full soothing to mark the quiet rest which the happy parted soul seems already to partake of—even in the brief space, ere we note that the loathing work of decay is advancing, or the worm begins to revel on the charms of his fallen victim.”

The following lines of one of the most talented of our modern writers, occurred to Miss Allen’s well stored mind as she held the young child to kiss his mother’s cold lips:—

“There is something strangely solemn in entering the chamber of one lately dead. It seems more empty, more vacant and cold, than when its master, though absent, is living. It appeals to our feelings and connects itself by the thin gossamer thread of selfishness which the human heart draws between our fate and every external event that befalls our fellow-men—with an after period when our chamber shall be left cold and lonely, and our places be no longer found among the living.”

After the child had kissed the lifeless form of her who had given him life, Dr. Allen quickly withdrew. The master-spirit of Lord Byron has summed up in few and

solemn words, the feelings that on these occasions fill the breast. Gentle reader, forgive my repeating them.

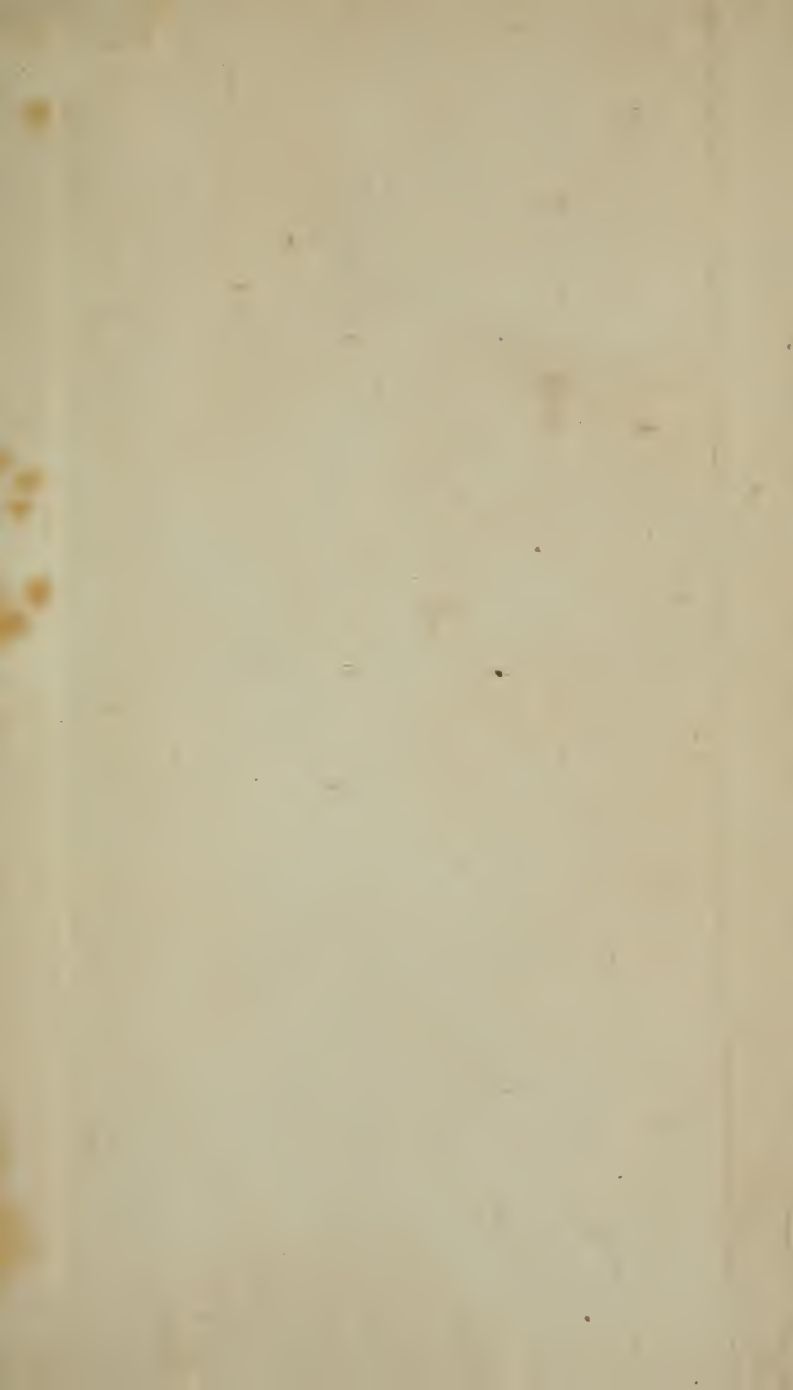
“He who hath bent him o’er the dead
Ere the first day of death is fled—
Before decay’s effacing fingers
Have swept the lines where beauty lingers;
And mark’d the mild, angelic air,
The rapture of repose that’s there,
The fixed, yet tender tints that streak,
The languor of the pallid cheek;
And—but for that sad shrouded eye,
That fires not, wins not, weeps not now:
And but for that chill, changeless brow,
Where cold abstraction’s apathy
Appals the gazing mourner’s heart:
Yes, but for these, and these alone,
Some moments—aye, some treacherous hour,
He still might doubt the tyrant’s power:
So fair, so calm, so softly sealed,
The first last look by death reveal’d!”

END OF VOL. I.

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